CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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‘Infiltration-hit Bengal needs BJP’

Modi says TMC’s “syndicate” system is actively working to ensure infiltrators are settled in Bengal

MALDA (WEST BENGAL)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday attacked the ruling TMC in Bengal by claiming that the party was using infiltrators as its vote bank.

Addressing a public rally in the Muslim-majority Malda district, Modi said, “Paltano dorkar, chai BJP sarkar (Need a change here, need BJP government here).”

The biggest challenge for West Bengal is infiltration and the infiltrators cannot be sent back till the TMC is in power, the PM said. ‘The large-scale illegal migration has altered the state’s demography, triggered riots, and thrived due to the ruling party’s “patronage and syndicate raj”, he added.

Saying infiltration pose “a very big challenge” before Bengal, Modi asserted that even developed and prosperous countries were taking firm action to identify and remove illegal migrants.

I want to assure refugees like the Matuas who took shelter in India due to religious persecution: you need not worry.

Bengal is surrounded on all sides by BJP governments that stand for good governance. Now it is time for good governance in Bengal too.

—Narendra Modi, PM

Amid the political controversy over the ongoing Special SIR of electoral rolls, he sought to reassure refugees such as the Matuas, who migrated to India after facing religious persecution in neighbouring Bangladesh, that they had nothing to fear.

More on page 6

A new era of travel! India’s first Vande Bharat sleeper hits tracks

MALDA

India’s first Vande Bharat sleeper train has officially hit the tracks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagging off the inaugural Howrah-Guwahati route on Saturday.

The PM also virtually flagged off the return Guwahati–Howrah Vande Bharat sleeper train from Malda.

Addressing a gathering after flagging off the train here, the PM termed it as a historic step for Indian Railways. “From the sacred land of Bengal, another major step towards the modernisation of Indian Railways has been taken today. Starting today, Vande Bharat Sleeper trains are being launched in India,” he said.

“This country’s first Vande Bharat sleeper train is connecting the land of Mother Kali to the land of Mother Kamakhya. In the coming times, this modern train will expand across the entire country,” he said.

Congratulating the people, PM Modi said, “I congratulate Bengal, Assam, and the entire country for this modern sleeper train. Today, Bengal received four more modern Amrit Bharat Express trains. New Jalpaiguri – Nagercoil Amrit Bharat Express; New Jalpaiguri – Tiruchirappalli Amrit Bharat Express; Alipurduar – Bengaluru Amrit Bharat Express; Alipurduar – Mumbai Amrit Bharat Express.” He also highlighted the momentum of development in the state.

The PM announced the addition of new rail services and infrastructure aimed at improving mobility and economic activity in the region. This state-of-the-art service is designed as an overnight link, establishing a high-speed rail connection between West Bengal and Assam, both of which are currently poll-bound states.

Airline-like travel experience at economical fares: PMO

Developed to meet the growing transportation needs, the fully AC Vande Bharat sleeper would offer passengers an “airline-like travel experience at economical fares”, the PMO stated.

Ticket fare (approximate) 3AC: ₹2,300 | 2AC: ₹3,000 | 1AC: ₹3,600

Did India give Trump taste of his own medicine?

WISHINGTON

Two US lawmakers have urged President Donald Trump to push for favourable provisions for pulse crops in any future trade deal with India, saying American producers face a “significant competitive disadvantage” due to what they described as “unfair” tariffs imposed by New Delhi.

In a letter dated Jan 16 addressed to trump, Republican Senators Steve Daines of Montana and Kevin Cramer of North Dakota said their states are the top two producers of pulse crops, including peas, while India is the world’s largest consumer, accounting for about 27% of global consumption.

They noted that lentils, chickpeas, dried beans, and peas are among the most commonly consumed pulse crops in India, but New Delhi has imposed substantial tariffs on American exports in these categories.

The Senators pointed out that India announced on October 30 last year a 30% tariff on yellow peas, which came into effect on November 1, 2025.

US lawmakers urge Trump to seek lower Indian tariffs on pulse crops in trade talks.

“As a result of the unfair Indian tariffs, U.S. pulse crop producers face a significant competitive disadvantage when exporting their high-quality product to India,” the letter said.

Daines and Cramer said engaging Prime Minister Narendra Modi on pulse crop tariffs to enhance the economic cooperation between the two countries would be “mutually beneficial” for both American producers and Indian consumers.

‘Outside cops cracking drug cases in state embarrassing’

BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Saturday that while overall crime rates in the state have declined significantly over the past few years, cybercrime and offences under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act continue to pose serious challenges and are yet to be brought under effective control.

Addressing the annual conference of police officers in Bengaluru, Siddaramaiah said the police department has been playing a key role in maintaining peace and public order. However, he expressed concern that police forces from other states have been cracking major drug cases in Karnataka, describing the situation as “embarrassing” and urging the Karnataka police to intensify their crackdown on drug networks.

“If there is a need to amend or strengthen the law to deal with the drug menace more effectively, the government will not hesitate to do so,” he said, adding that the government is prepared to introduce a new law in the forthcoming Assembly session to ensure stricter action against those involved in drug-related offences.

‘No one should be spared’

Siddaramaiah reiterated that the Constitution guarantees equal opportunity and protection to every citizen and that the law must apply equally to all, irrespective of power or position.

“No one should be spared for wrongdoing. The powerful and anti-social elements must not be given any leeway under any circumstances,” he said.

He also stressed that protecting the weak, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, backward classes and religious minorities, is a collective responsibility, and that ensuring equal justice for all is a fundamental duty of the police.

‘Police involvement in criminal activities shameful’

While stating that crime cannot be eliminated entirely, Siddaramaiah said it can certainly be reduced through vigilance and preparedness. He termed it “shameful” that police personnel themselves were involved in 88 criminal cases in the past year.

QUICK READ

NIA chargesheets 5 for ‘propagating’ terror online

NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday chargesheeted five persons, including a woman, in a case relating to online radicalisation of vulnerable youth by terror group Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) in Gujarat. The accused -- identified as Mohammad Fardeen, Kureshi Sefulla, Mohammad Faique, Zeeshan Ali and Shama Parveen -- have been named in the charge sheet filed before a special NIA.

‘Protect Constitution, judiciary, democracy’

JALPAIGURI: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday urged Chief Justice of India Surya Kant to protect the country’s Constitution, democracy and judiciary. Banerjee, speaking at a programme to inaugurate a new building of the Jalpaiguri Circuit Bench of the Calcutta HC, also called upon Justice Kant to protect the people of the country from being wrongly targeted by “agencies”. “Please protect the Constitution, democracy, judiciary, history and geography.”

Bheemanna Khandre laid to rest with state honours

BIDAR

Freedom fighter, veteran Congress leader and former minister Bheemanna Khandre was on Saturday laid to rest with state honours at the Shanti Dham here on Saturday.

The mortal remains were interred near his wife’s samadhi, surrounded by thousands of people who have come to pay their last respects.

After public viewing till 2 pm, Dr Bheemanna Khandre’s body was taken in a procession to Shanti Dham from his residence in an open vehicle, and passed through Basaveshwara Circle, Gandhi Circle and Ambedkar Circle before reaching the burial ground. Thousands of people had gathered to pay their last respects to the veteran politician, who was a stalwart leader and a champion of social justice. The state government presented a gun salute and other honours to the late leader, acknowledging his contributions to the state. The last rites were performed as per Veerashaiva Lingayat traditions, with thousands of devotees, seers and dignitaries in attendance. The last rites ceremony were performed with vibhuti, rudraksha and bilva patra, as per Veerashaiva Lingayat traditions.

Khandre passed away at his residence in Bidar on Wednesday at the age of 103. Born on January 8, 1923, in Gorta (B) village in Hulsur taluk of Bidar district, he was elected as an MLA four times from the Basavakalyan constituency in 1962, 1967, 1978, and 1983.

TN polls: AIADMK on ‘guarantee mode’

CHENNAI

Taking the lead for the forthcoming Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) on Saturday rolled out voter-centric pledges.

The announcement by AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami came even before the Election Manifesto Committee (EMC) completed its public hearing.

Addressing the media at the AIADMK headquarters after paying homage to party founder MG Ramachandran on his 109th birth anniversary, Palaniswami said further promises will be made once the EMC completes its meetings across the state.

AIADMK’s 5 guarantees

- Magalir Kulavilakku Thittam
- Free bus rides for men in city buses, just like women.
- Amma Illam Scheme
- Extention of 100 days employment scheme to 150 days
- Amma Two-Wheeler Scheme

Govt nod to host international, IPL matches at Chinnaswamy Stadium

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Home Department on Saturday granted permission to the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) to host international and IPL matches at the iconic M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru.

In a press release, KSCA said that the permission is subject to compliance with specific terms and conditions prescribed by the government and concerned authorities.

“The Association has already presented a detailed compliance roadmap before the Expert Review Committee and remains fully committed to implementing all safety, security, and crowd-management measures in letter and spirit,” KSCSA said in the statement. No high-level matches have been played at the Chinnaswamy Stadium since the June 4 stampede that claimed the lives of 11 people. The stadium also lost out on an opportunity to host ICC T20 World Cup matches that will be played in India next month.

RESORT POLITICS RETURNS!

Maha drama! Shinde moves corporators to hotel

MUMBAI

After the BMC verdict, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has reportedly moved newly-elected Shiv Sena corporators to a hotel in Bandra amid fears of poaching.

The move came shortly after a defiant Uddhav Thackeray insisted that it remained his “dream” to see a Shiv Sena (UBT) mayor elected in Mumbai despite losing control of the BMC and that shall come true “if god is willing”.

Uddhav drops a cryptic message

Addressing Sena (UBT) workers in Mumbai, Uddhav Thackeray sought to recast the loss of the BMC not as a defeat but as a morale-boosting outcome achieved under difficult circumstances.

“You all are the true architects of this success; we are merely a medium. The result that has come in such circumstances is truly a matter of pride,” he said, repeatedly praising party cadres for standing by the organisation despite scarce resources.

Launching a sharp attack on the BJP and the ruling alliance, Thackeray accused them of misusing power and winning the civic polls through “betrayal”.

“They believe they have finished Shiv Sena on paper, but they can never destroy the Shiv Sena that exists on the ground. They can never remain connected to the ground,” he said, alleging that every tactic - “saam, daam, dand, bhed” - was deployed against his party. “The traitors left, but they could not buy loyalty,” he added. In one of his strongest remarks, Thackeray alleged that the BJP had “mortgaged Mumbai” to secure victory.

Why Shinde is worried?

After 25 years the Thackerays’ lost their hold over the BMC, India’s richest civic body, in the recently-held municipal elections.

In the 227-member BMC, the majority mark stands at 114. The BJP has won 89 seats and the Eknath Shinde–led Shiv Sena 29, taking the ruling alliance to 118, just four seats above the halfway mark.

With margins thin and the stakes high ahead of the mayoral election in India’s richest civic body, Shinde has moved his newly elected corporators to a hotel to guard against poaching or last-minute defections that could upset the arithmetic and complicate control of the civic house.

Party leaders said the move was a precautionary step to prevent poaching at a time when the numbers are close and the mayoral contest is imminent.

More on page 7

QUICK READ

IT professional injured in pothole accident

Bengaluru

Sridhar Mudooru, an IT professional, sustained a serious shoulder fracture after his scooter hit a pothole on CDP Road connecting Varthur and Panathur in Mahadevapura. Doctors recommended surgery costing over Rs 1.25 lakh, with six months for full recovery. Residents and citizen groups say the incident highlights Bengaluru's poor road infrastructure despite claims by the Greater Bengaluru Authority that thousands of potholes have been repaired. Long-standing issues like flooding, crumbling roads, and silt accumulation persist. Citizens demand urgent resurfacing, mechanised silt removal, dedicated maintenance plans, and regular public disclosure of budgets. The administrative transition to GBA has slowed monitoring and accountability.

Drunk man wields mace in Anekal over oil dispute

Bengaluru

In Gaurenahalli, Anekal taluk, a man named Basavaraj created chaos in the middle of the road after a dispute over oil. Intoxicated, he allegedly threatened his acquaintance Prakash with a mace, using abusive language. The shocking incident was captured on CCTV, showing Basavaraj running around brandishing the weapon. Anekal police visited the spot and conducted an inspection, but locals criticized authorities for failing to control hooliganism in the area. The incident has sparked anger among residents, raising concerns over public safety and the need for stricter action against disruptive and violent behavior.

R. Ashoka demands justice for Ballari activist murder

He cited the January 1 shooting, alleged political protection obstructing justice, and pointed to systematic law enforcement failures

BENGALURU

Opposition leader R. Ashoka has demanded that the Karnataka Congress government provide justice for the murder of a Ballari activist. Speaking at a protest in Ballari, he called for the immediate arrest of the guilty and urged that the case be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Ashok criticized the state administration, saying the police have failed to take action even after two years. He said, "An innocent activist lost his life, yet the guilty are roaming freely in Bengaluru. The Home Minister seems unaware of what is happening in districts. If the accused belonged to other parties, they would have been arrested immediately. But here, there is a clear cover-up."

He highlighted a gunfire incident on January 1, which coincided with New Year celebrations, adding that police have not identified or arrested the shooter. Ashok alleged that political pressure and protection from Congress leaders, including DCM D.K. Shivakumar, have obstructed justice. He also cited attacks

on Janardhan Reddy and threats to officers, pointing to a systematic failure in law enforcement.

The leader called out the police for poor handling of other criminal cases, including robberies and attacks with petrol bombs, saying the public cannot trust the current system. He urged the government to act responsibly or step aside to allow justice to prevail.

Ashok concluded by saying that handing the case to the CBI is necessary to ensure a fair and impartial investigation, restore public faith, and punish those responsible. He warned that opposition leaders will continue to raise questions in the state assembly and fight until justice is served.

B'luru South moves to clear roads, encroachments

The Commissioner ordered a feasibility study for a Vega City Mall skywalk, removal of encroachments, park and gym repairs, tree clearing, and road humps near Ayyappa Swamy Temple

BENGALURU

The Bengaluru South Municipal Corporation Commissioner, K. N. Ramesh, conducted an extensive inspection of N.S. Palya, Dollars Colony, and Vijaya Bank Layout areas on Saturday to address public complaints and improve civic facilities.

During the visit, the Commissioner highlighted the need to remove illegal encroachments, abandoned vehicles, and construction material blocking roads and footpaths. In Dollars Colony, residents had complained about illegal activities on vacant BDA lands. Ramesh directed officials to increase police patrols in the area to prevent further violations. He also ordered the immediate clearance of 40-50 old vehicles parked on streets without heirs. Notices were to be issued to owners of unauthorized constructions, and fines imposed for dumped materials.

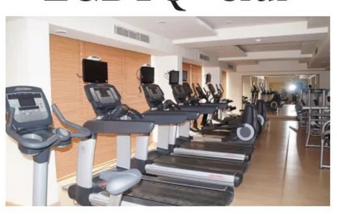
To improve pedestrian safety, the Commissioner instructed authorities to study the feasibility of a skywalk near Vega City Mall Junction. In Vijaya Bank Layout, he called for the removal of encroachments on public properties, including footpaths outside Chaitrashree Palace Apartments and BDA lands along Rajmarg. Residents' requests to repair parks and gym equipment and remove dangerous dried trees were also approved. Road humps will be built near Ayyappa Swamy Temple to ease traffic congestion.

In N.S. Palya, Ramesh launched a proposal to establish a 'Kasa Kiosk' on 1st Cross to manage garbage disposal more efficiently.

Speaking to the public, the Commissioner said, "Only field visits reveal the real issues. Every complaint has been recorded and will be resolved as a priority. Citizen participation is crucial, and we welcome volunteers and experts to work with the corporation."

He added that the process for clearing old roadside vehicles with the traffic police is at the tender stage. Residents praised the Commissioner's swift action and proactive approach in tackling long-standing civic problems.

Bengaluru gym poster sparks outrage over LGBTQ+ slur



BENGALURU

A poster at Zest Fitness Studio in HSR Layout sparked online outrage for reportedly stating that gays are not allowed to lose weight. The notice went viral, with social media users condemning it as offensive and discriminatory toward the LGBTQ+ community. After backlash, the gym apologized, removed the poster, and clarified it was not meant to target anyone. Residents and fitness enthusiasts criticized the incident, urging inclusive communication in public spaces. The controversy highlights the need for safe, welcoming environments for all, prompting businesses to review policies and ensure respectful messaging for diverse communities.

D.S. Ramesh urged authorities to ensure sanitation workers access toilets respectfully, affirming it as a basic human right

Sanitation workers must be allowed to use public toilets

BENGALURU

The Bengaluru East Municipal Corporation has issued strict orders ensuring all sanitation workers, including civil servants, loaders, cleaners, and drivers, can use toilets in public places without restrictions.

The directive comes after sanitation workers raised complaints about being denied access to toilets in hotels, restaurants, malls, petrol pumps, and other commercial establishments. Female workers, in particular, had reported severe difficulties due to the lack of accessible toilets during work.

D.S. Ramesh, Chairman of the Karnataka State Safai Karmachari Commission, emphasized that access to toilets is a basic human right and an essential part of maintaining health and dignity. In a letter to all relevant authorities under the Bengaluru East Municipal Corporation, he instructed that sanitation workers must be allowed to use toilets respectfully at all public and private establishments.

The order references the Supreme Court ruling in Rajib Kalita v. Union of India dated January 15, 2025, which highlighted that the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution includes access to a safe and clean environment. The court emphasized that it is the state's duty to protect public health and ensure essential facilities are accessible to all.

The Commissioner warned that any attempt to prevent sanitation workers from using toilets would invite strict legal action. He stated that the Municipal Corporation is committed to protecting the health, dignity, and fundamental rights of sanitation workers, who play a vital role in keeping the city clean.

"The work of sanitation staff is crucial for society, and it is our responsibility to ensure they are treated with respect and provided a safe and hygienic environment," D.S. Ramesh said. Authorities have been asked to implement the instructions immediately across all wards.

Bengaluru MP calls for new teaching hospital

BENGALURU

Bengaluru Rural MP C.N. Manjunath has urged the Karnataka government to build a 650-bed hospital within the proposed Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) medical college campus at Archakarahalli in Bengaluru South district. He highlighted that the new campus, currently under construction at an estimated cost of ₹600 crore, includes administrative and academic buildings but lacks a teaching hospital — a mandatory requirement under National Medical Commission (NMC) norms.

In letters to Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil and RGUHS Vice-Chancellor B.C. Bhagwan, Dr. Manjunath stressed that a hospital on campus is essential for both academic and public health purposes. Ramanagara, being a district headquarters, requires a tertiary-care hospital to support clinical training for students while providing advanced healthcare services to local and surrounding rural populations.

Currently, the district hospital has only 250 beds and is located nearly 3 km from the new medical college campus. According to Dr. Manjunath, this distance poses challenges in integrating academic training, emergency care, and efficient use of manpower and resources. Without a campus hospital, faculty and patients would need to shuttle between the college and the district hospital, causing inconvenience and operational inefficiency.

He pointed out that the proposed campus has sufficient land to accommodate a hospital and called on the government and the university to re-examine the project plan. A hospital on site would allow students to receive hands-on training in real-time clinical settings, while residents of Ramanagara and nearby rural areas would gain improved access to secondary and tertiary healthcare services.

Dr. Manjunath emphasized that timely construction of the hospital would strengthen medical education and public health outcomes, and ensure the full potential of the new RGUHS medical college is realized.

Rail travel sparks security concern in Bengaluru

BENGALURU

Karnataka Legislative Council Opposition Leader Chalavadi Narayanaswamy has raised alarm over the movement of illegal immigrants from West Bengal to Bengaluru via trains, calling it a serious threat to national security. He has written to Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav urging immediate action to prevent misuse of the rail system.

Narayanaswamy pointed out that 15 to 17 trains run weekly between West Bengal and Bengaluru. Public complaints suggest that illegal immigrants are using these trains to enter South India. He expressed concern that some of these individuals may have crossed international borders illegally.

A key issue highlighted in the letter is the use of fake or illegally obtained documents, including Aadhaar cards and voter IDs, by people travelling on these routes. He cited the recent Bombay High Court ruling that such documents cannot be treated as proof of citizenship. Despite this, fake IDs are reportedly being used to bypass security checks.

Bengaluru, being a major hub for labour accommodation, has seen an increase in settlement by illegal immigrants from West Bengal and North India, he warned, creating potential internal security risks for the city and the state.

To address the problem, Narayanaswamy suggested several measures: strict biometric verification at major railway stations, re-examining the frequency of trains, covert deployment of Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Intelligence Bureau personnel, and linking the railway booking system to national databases, including SIR/NRC, to prevent travel using fraudulent documents.

He urged the Central Government to treat this issue as a priority national security matter, emphasizing that the safety of India's cities depends on vigilant railway monitoring and strict enforcement of identity checks. Narayanaswamy called for prompt and firm steps to ensure no illegal entry threatens Bengaluru's security.

Government seizes crores-worth encroached cattle land

ANEKAL

Authorities in Anekal have reclaimed government land worth crores of rupees that had been illegally occupied. Around 10 acres of cattle land in Survey No. 110 of Koppa village, on the outskirts of Bangalore, had been seized by land grabbers who also produced fake documents to claim ownership.

The forged papers were submitted to AC Apoorva Bidari, but a verification by a team led by the District Collector revealed their illegality. Upon confirming the fraud, District Collector Jagadish immediately ordered a clearance operation to remove the encroachments.

The District Collector personally supervised the operation, which was carried out under tight police security to prevent any disturbances. Authorities said all illegal structures and claims on the land were removed, restoring it to government control.

Officials emphasized that such operations are necessary to protect public property and prevent misuse of government land. The recovered cattle land is expected to be preserved for its intended agricultural and livestock purposes, benefiting local farmers and the community.

This operation sends a strong message against illegal land occupation and highlights the government's commitment to safeguarding public resources while ensuring transparency and accountability in land records.

Husband commits suicide over alcohol problem

NELAMANGALA

In a tragic incident in Nelamangala, a 32-year-old man allegedly took his own life after struggling with alcohol addiction, leaving his wife and young child devastated.

Uday Kumar, a resident of Virajpet in Kodagu district, was found hanging at his home in Ku Ku Du Regere village in Uttara Talu. He had been married to Kalyani for six years, and the couple has a two-year-old child.

According to local reports, Uday had been returning home drunk for the past five days after work. His wife, Kalyani, who does not consume alcohol, had repeatedly advised him to quit drinking and focus on his responsibilities, including work and family.

The tension at home over his drinking reportedly contributed to his decision to end his life.

Upon learning about the incident, local police rushed to the scene and conducted an investigation.

Uday Kumar's body was sent to Nelamangala Public Hospital for postmortem examination. A case has been registered at Madana Yakanahalli Police Station to look into the circumstances surrounding his death.

Police authorities have urged families dealing with similar issues to seek help from support groups and counseling services. They also stressed that alcohol addiction can have devastating effects on relationships and mental health, warning communities to remain vigilant and supportive.

JUSTICE REASSESSES EVIDENCE

High Court acquits man over unreliable statement

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has acquitted a man who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly murdering a woman with whom he had an illicit relationship. The bench emphasized that a dying declaration is considered only if it is fully credible and reliable.

Somashekar had been convicted after the woman, suffering severe burn injuries, reportedly gave a pre-mortem statement claiming he set her on fire. The High Court, led by Justice H.P. Sandesh and Justice Venkatesh Nayak T., noted serious doubts about the statement's reliability. The declaration was two pages long, recorded while the victim had burns on her face, lips, and other parts of the body, raising concerns about her mental and physical fitness to give a statement.

The court observed that the pre-mortem statement was not collected according to legal norms. It was recorded by a doctor and police sub-inspector, both witnesses in the case, which further questioned its credibility. The bench also cited lapses in post-mortem procedures and inconsistencies in statements given by the victim's family and neighbors, who were not direct eyewitnesses but arrived after the incident.

Citing Supreme Court guidelines, the bench held that a conviction cannot rely solely on a pre-mortem statement, especially when circumstantial evidence is insufficient. Since the prosecution failed to prove the charge beyond reasonable doubt, Somashekar was acquitted.

The case dates back to when the accused's parents objected to his relationship with the victim. Following a confrontation, the woman was set on fire and later died in Victoria Hospital. The trial court had sentenced Somashekar to life imprisonment based on the chargesheet, but the High Court found the evidence unreliable.

QUICK READ

'Nija Mahatma Baba Saheb' to be staged on Jan 19

HUBBALLI

The play Nija Mahatma Baba Saheb will be staged on Monday, January 19th, at 6 pm at Sawai Gandharva Hall in Hubballi. The event is organized by Rangbhoomi Trust Kodagu in collaboration with Prerana Seva Sanstha and Niramaya Foundation. Lawyer Sanjeev Badaskar announced that entry to the play will be free for all. Theatre lovers and the public are invited to attend and enjoy the performance that celebrates the life and legacy of Baba Saheb.

Ambigara Choudaiya Jayanti Celebration on Jan 21

GADAG

The Gadag District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Kannada and Culture Department will organize the Nijasharan Ambigara Choudaiya Jayanti on January 21 at 11 am in the District Administration Auditorium. The program will be inaugurated by Dr. H.K. Patil, with dignitaries including Legislative Council Speaker Basavaraj Horatti and Minister Shivaraj S. Thangadagi in attendance. Special lectures will be delivered, and several state and district officials will participate, highlighting the cultural and historical significance of Nijasharan Ambigara Choudaiya.

BJP Offers Compensation to Ballari Riot Victim Family

BJP delegation provided Rs 10 lakh compensation to Rajashekar's family, a victim who was killed in Ballari riot

BALLARI

A BJP delegation visited the family of Rajashekar Reddy, a Congress worker who died during the recent Ballari banner riots, and offered financial support of Rs 10 lakh.

The delegation included BJP state president BY Vijayendra, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka, Council Opposition Leader Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, MP Govinda Karajol, MLA Janardhana Reddy, former minister B Sriramulu, and other party leaders. They handed over the cheque to Rajashekar's mother at the family residence and consoled the bereaved family members,

including his brother and sister.

Speaking on the visit, R Ashoka stated that while financial help provides temporary relief, it cannot bring back the life lost. He urged an impartial investigation into the incident and demanded that the case be handed over to the CBI to ensure justice. He criticized the state government for allegedly pressuring the local police and emphasized that the guilty, no matter how influential, must be punished. The BJP leaders highlighted that the riots and attacks on party workers' residences reflect the collapse of law and order in the state under the Congress government. The visit was accompanied by a massive protest in Ballari, where public anger was expressed against the violence and the government's failure to maintain safety.

BY Vijayendra also posted that the party's struggle will continue until justice is served for all victims of the riots and hooliganism, stressing that such incidents are unacceptable in a democratic society.

This visit and compensation aim to support the bereaved family while demanding a fair and transparent investigation into Rajashekar's death.

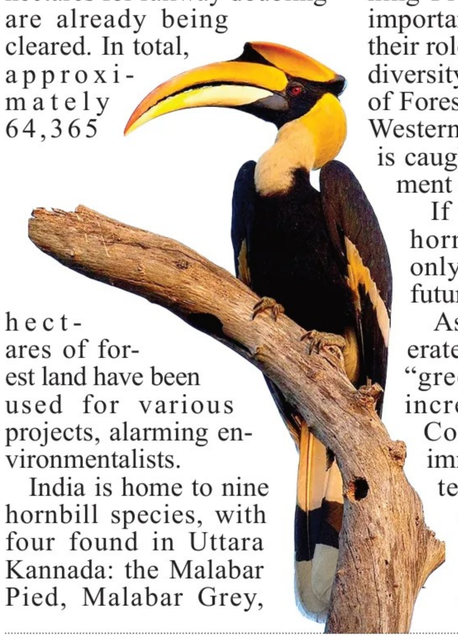
Development Push Threatens Hornbill Habitat in Forests

KARWAR

Hornbills, vital for forest growth in Uttara Kannada, are under threat as large projects like roads, railways, and dams destroy their habitats and nesting trees.

The hornbills, known as the "forest pioneers" of the Western Ghats, are facing the risk of extinction in Uttara Kannada district due to multiple large-scale development projects. These birds, which help cultivate forests, are losing their habitat in areas including the Kali Tiger Reserve.

Across the district, development work is in full swing. The Sharavati Pump Storage Project, Ankola-Hubli road expansion, and railway track laying between Dudh Sagar and Castle Rock are affecting dense forest areas. Around 54 hectares in the Honnavar sanctuary, 49.43 hectares for the road project, and 9.25 hectares for railway doubling are already being cleared. In total, approximately 64,365 hectares of forest land have been used for various projects, alarming environmentalists.



India is home to nine hornbill species, with four found in Uttara Kannada: the Malabar Pied, Malabar Grey, Grey Hornbill, and Great Indian Hornbill. These birds depend on large, old trees for nesting. Senior Forest Department officials warn that without such trees, hornbills cannot reproduce, threatening future generations.

To raise awareness, the Haliyal division of the Forest Department organizes the annual "Hornbill Festival." This two-day event, beginning Friday, highlights the importance of hornbills and their role in maintaining biodiversity. Chief Conservator of Forests Hiralal said, "The Western Ghats' biodiversity is caught between development and preservation.

If we do not act now, hornbills will survive only in photographs for future generations."

As development accelerates, Uttara Kannada's "green guardians" face increasing challenges. Conservationists urge immediate steps to protect these vital birds and ensure the survival of the Western Ghats' unique ecosystem.

Early Detection Crucial for Brain Health: Dr. Rajendra

GADAG

Detecting and treating brain disorders at an early stage is extremely important, said Dr. Rajendra C. Basarigida, District Non-Communicable Diseases Control Officer. He advised anyone showing neurological symptoms to immediately contact doctors or neurologists at the Rantaka Brain Initiative Treatment Center in the district hospital.

Dr. Basarigida spoke during the inauguration of a training workshop on the Rantaka Brain Initiative for district pharmacy officers. The workshop was held at the Taluk Health Officers' Hall and organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Gadag District Health and Family Welfare Department, and KH Patil Institute of Medical Sciences.

He highlighted that social interactions, participation in community activities, and regular exercise help improve memory, cognition, and overall brain health. Dr. Basarigida emphasized that sharpening cognition through physical and mental activities is essential for a healthy brain.

Dr. Y.K. Bhajantri, District Planning Officer of the Health Department, said stress is affecting people of all ages, including children. He encouraged incorporating meditation, yoga, and healthy habits into daily routines to maintain good health. Praveen Ronada, District Coordinator of the Rantaka Brain Initiative, urged ASHA workers to apply the training knowledge in their daily health services. The

workshop included sessions on brain and mental health led by Dr. Ashwini Kuri, Ravi Nandihal, and Sri Sridhar.

Senior and junior pharmacy officers from across Gadag district actively participated. Experts on the stage included Dr. Preeti, Mrs. Saroja Kattimani, Mr. Budesh Shiddana Gowda, Mr. Vai Hakki, and Sunil Baddi. The program concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. Praveen Ronada, reinforcing the importance of applying the training in daily practice.

Shivalinga-Related Artifact Unearthed During Lakkundi Excavation

GADAG

An important ancient artifact has been discovered during ongoing excavation work at Lakkundi, a well-known historical site in Gadag district. The finding has drawn attention from historians and locals, as the object is believed to be connected to the worship of the Shivalinga.

According to members of the Lakkundi Development Authority, the artifact appears to be designed for the smooth flow of water. Such structures were commonly used in olden times during Shiva worship rituals. Experts believe this object may have been part of a larger temple setup that existed centuries ago in the region.

The excavation work is being carried out carefully without the use of machines. Instead, both men and women laborers are manually digging the site. Officials said this method helps protect fragile historical remains from damage. The slow and careful process has already helped uncover several clues about Lakkundi's rich past.

Excavation efforts gained momentum after a treasure was found earlier while digging the foundation of a house in the village. However, officials clarified that archaeological work has been conducted in Lakkundi even in earlier years, as the area is known for its historical importance and ancient temple structures.

Lakkundi, often called a land of temples, is receiving renewed attention due to development efforts led by former minister H.K. Patil. Large funds have been allocated to restore and preserve its heritage. Siddu Patil, a member of the Development Authority, said that ₹10 crore has been released for the restoration of six temples and a well.

Akshara Workers Protest Demanding Salary and Benefits

DHARWAD

Members of the Karnataka Rajya Samyukta Akshara Da Soha Karmikar Sangh staged a protest in front of the Dharwad District Collectorate at 2 pm on Saturday. The workers demanded the fulfillment of multiple pending requests, including an increase in their honorarium and proper recognition for their services. The Akshara Da Soha Karmikar Sangh has played a vital role in protecting child health and reducing malnutrition among schoolchildren in Karnataka. The hot meal workers, responsible for preparing and distributing nutritious meals in schools, demanded to be officially recognized as government employees. They also called for social security benefits such as pension, Employees' State Insurance (ESI), and Provident Fund (PF) to ensure financial stability for themselves and their families.

During the protest, the workers raised slogans against both the central and state governments, urging immediate action to address their concerns. They expressed frustration over delays in implementing these benefits, emphasizing the importance of their work in improving child nutrition and health outcomes across the state.

Farmhouse 'Natural Death' Exposed as Murder

BAGALKOT

A tragic murder case from Hirepadasalagi village in Jamkhandi taluk of Bagalkot district has come to light after police uncovered the truth behind a woman's death in a farmhouse. What first appeared to be a natural death later turned out to be a crime driven by jealousy and anger.

The incident occurred on the night. The woman, Yamanavva, aged 40, had been living alone for many years after separating from her husband nearly two decades ago. During this time, she developed a close relationship with Srishaila Patil, a 67-year-old man. Their relationship continued for a long period, but problems started when misunderstandings arose between them.

Police said the accused became deeply upset after suspecting that Yamanavva had started seeing another man

who was much younger. This led to frequent arguments. On the night of the incident, another quarrel broke out inside the farmhouse where Yamanavva was staying. The argument soon turned violent.

During the fight, the accused allegedly struck the woman on her ear. As the situation worsened, he lost control and strangled her. When she stopped breathing, he became frightened and ran away from the farmhouse, leaving the body behind.

The following morning, the accused returned and acted as if nothing had happened. He opened the door, cried loudly, and told others that Yamanavva had died suddenly. He claimed she suffered a heart attack and even went to the police station himself to report the death.

Unusual Rattling Sound Startles Villagers at Anjaneya Temple

KANAKAGIRI

Amarnath Jarkiholi visited the historic Sri Kanakachalapati Temple in Kanakagiri town and offered special prayers. During the visit, he sought the blessings of Sri Kanakachalapati Lakshminarasimha Swamy and spent time understanding the religious and cultural importance of the temple. The Sri Kanakachalapati Temple is one of the most famous and ancient temples in the region and attracts devotees from different parts of the state. The temple is known for its unique architecture, rich history, and detailed stone carvings. Amarnath Jarkiholi expressed his happiness after visiting the temple and praised the efforts made to preserve its heritage.

On this occasion, Picard Bank Director Ramesh Nayak explained the special features of the temple in detail. He spoke about the five grand towers of the temple and their architectural style. He also highlighted the historical background of the temple and the artistic value of the sculptures carved on its walls and pillars. According to him, each part of the temple reflects the skill and devotion of ancient craftsmen.

Amarnath Jarkiholi listened carefully to the explanations and appreciated the temple's design and spiritual atmosphere. He said such temples play an important role in keeping traditions alive and passing cultural values to future generations.

Several youth leaders and supporters were present during the visit. Among them were Nandu Nayak, Sachin, Anand Hulihaidar, Puneet Bondade, and others.

No Force Can Weaken Reddy and Sriramulu: Bommai

BALLARI

Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai said that no one can suppress the political strength of former ministers Janardhana Reddy and B. Sriramulu. He stated that the BJP will continue its fight until the "corrupt Congress government" is removed from power.

Bommai was speaking at a massive protest rally held in Ballari against the recent unrest related to banner displays in the city. He said the BJP will take its movement from village to village and stand firmly with Janardhana Reddy and Sriramulu. According to him, the unity between the two leaders has created fear among Congress leaders in the region.

Explaining the reason behind the recent tensions, Bommai said Janardhana Reddy had come to Ballari following a court order, which should not have been an issue. He added that the strong bond between Reddy and Sriramulu is shaking the political ground of the Congress. "Sriramulu's speed and Janardhana Reddy's strength together are like a storm," he said.

Bommai also spoke about the long-standing demand of the Valmiki community for increased reservation. He said the BJP government fulfilled the demand by increasing reservation from 3 percent to 7 percent when he was Chief Minister. This decision, he said, helped many children secure seats in medical and engineering colleges. He credited this achievement to the leadership of B.S. Yediyurappa.

NAGARAJ LACKED EVIDENCE, WARNED JUDGE

Youth Dies After Failing to Prove Corruption Claims

KUNDGOL

Nagaraj Gurusiddappa, a young resident of Kundgol taluk, tragically committed suicide after alleging corruption in the Gram Panchayat but failing to provide any supporting documents during the Hubballi court hearing. Nagaraj had previously claimed corruption in 26 Panchayats, including Kubihal Gram Panchayat, and had submitted applications to both the President and Prime Minister's Office seeking a halt to government grants.

Prior to the hearing, Nagaraj underwent a mental health assessment on January 9 at Kubihal Gram Panchayat. However, during the hearing held today, January 16, presided over by District Judges B.S. Bharathi and Parashuram Doddamani, he could not produce valid evidence to support his claims. Judge B.S. Bharathi cautioned that filing false accusations could result in criminal charges and emphasized the importance of submitting proper documents.

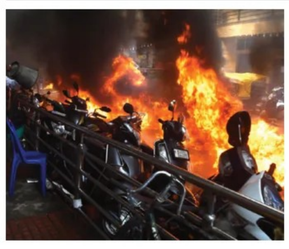
The hearing also focused

on local public concerns, including requests for a volleyball stadium, road improvements, sewer cleaning, Navagram site allocation, and preventing water wastage. Citizens participated actively, raising these issues to ensure they receive timely attention.

The judges directed Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary Mallikarjun Todalbagi and TAPAM Executive Officer Jagadish Kammar to take action within seven days. They also encouraged residents to pay pending taxes to support the development of the Gram Panchayat. Tahsildar Raju Mavarakar and other Gram Panchayat Development Officers were present to monitor the proceedings.

This incident highlights the need for proper documentation and evidence when making allegations of corruption, as well as the importance of mental health awareness in high-pressure situations.

QUICK READ



Fire Accident Occurs During Deities' Procession

RAMANAGARA

A fire accident occurred during a religious procession of deities in Ramanagara, triggering panic among devotees and local residents who had gathered in large numbers to witness the event. The incident took place while the procession was moving through the city as part of a religious celebration, drawing participation from various communities. According to preliminary information, the fire reportedly broke out due to sparks from firecrackers and decorative lighting used during the procession. As the flames suddenly flared up, confusion spread among the crowd, prompting devotees to disperse in fear. Eyewitnesses said the fire spread quickly to nearby decorative materials, intensifying the situation for a brief period.

MLA Yogeeshwar Flags Off Marathon Run in the City

RAMANAGARA

A marathon run organised in Ramanagara city witnessed enthusiastic participation on Sunday, with Yogeeshwar, MLA of Ramanagara constituency, formally flagging off the event. The marathon was organised with the objective of promoting physical fitness, healthy lifestyles, and awareness about the importance of regular exercise among citizens. The event took place in Ramanagara, where participants from different age groups, including students, youth, and fitness enthusiasts, gathered early in the morning to take part in the run. The sight of hundreds of runners moving through the city streets created an energetic and motivating atmosphere. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Yogeeshwar said that marathons and similar sports activities play a vital role in building a healthy society.

Digital E-Stamp System Rolled Out Across Karnataka

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The Registration and Stamps Department has introduced the Digital E-Stamp system across Karnataka, marking a significant step towards digitisation and transparency in property and document registration services. As part of the rollout, a series of training programmes have been organised in various taluks of Chikkaballapur district to familiarise stakeholders with the new system and its operational procedures. According to an official release, the training sessions will be conducted in six taluks under Chikkaballapur district, namely Chintamani, Sidlaghatta, Chikkaballapur, Bagepalli, Gauribidanur, and Gudibande. These programmes aim to ensure smooth implementation of the Digital E-Stamp mechanism and to address practical issues related to its usage.

Vidyarthi Chetana Programme *Launched in Chitradurga*

District Ayush Officer launched Vidyarthi Chetana programme to enhance students' physical fitness and mental resilience.

CHITRADURGA

Emphasising the importance of physical fitness and mental strength among students, District Ayush Officer Dr. Chandrakant S. Nagasamudra said that both physical and psychological resilience are crucial, especially during examination periods. He stated that the "Vidyarthi Chetana" programme has been designed as a supportive initiative to strengthen students' mental stability and overall well-being.

He was speaking after inaugurating the Vidyarthi Chetana programme organised by the Ayush Department at the Indira Gandhi Residential School in J.J. Halli (Javanagondanahalli) village of Hiriyur taluk, in Chitradurga district. The programme aims to holistically improve the health of students residing in hostels and residential schools.

Dr. Chandrakant explained that the Vidyarthi Chetana initiative is being implemented under the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP). The programme includes comprehensive medical check-ups, guidance on yoga, meditation, and pranayama to strengthen mental health, distribution of memory-enhancing Ayurvedic medicines, and regular health monitoring of students. He described it as a unique initiative focusing equally on physical health, mental clarity, and emotional balance.

Under the programme, Ayush medical officers will regularly visit the residential school over the next four months to conduct health check-ups, provide health-promoting medicines, and train students in yoga and meditation practices. He urged students to make the best use of the programme and improve their academic performance by maintaining good physical and mental health.

On the occasion, a handbook containing information on home remedies and healthy dietary practices was released for the benefit of students. As part of the programme, students were also served Kharjooradi Mantha, a nutritious Ayurvedic health drink known to help cool the body and improve vitality.

The event was attended by school principal Lalithamma, vice-principal Tanuja, hostel warden Krishnamurthy, physical education teacher Vijayakumar, doctors Dr. T. Shivakumar from the Hiriyur Government Ayurvedic Hospital and Raghuveer from the Government Ayurvedic Dispensary, along with other staff members.

District Tops State in 'Odu Karnataka' Implementation

Chitradurga district has emerged as the state leader in effectively implementing Odu Karnataka for primary students.

CHITRADURGA

Chitradurga district has secured a leading position in Karnataka in the effective implementation of the 'Odu Karnataka' programme, aimed at strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy skills among government primary school students. This was stated by Dr. S. Akash, Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat, while sharing details of the programme's progress on January 17.

The 'Odu Karnataka' initiative has been introduced for students studying in Classes 4 and 5 of government primary schools with the objective of improving basic language and mathematics skills. The programme is being implemented by the state government in collaboration with Pratham, a nationally recognised organisation working in the field of education. For the academic year 2025–26, the programme has been relaunched across the state with a clear focus on achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) competencies among children.

Dr. Akash said that Chitradurga district has taken the lead in timely and structured implementation of the programme. At the district level, the first phase of training was conducted on October 28, during which 130 Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) received intensive training from Pratham. Subsequently, at the cluster level, training was extended to 1,695 teachers on October 31 to ensure effective classroom implementation.

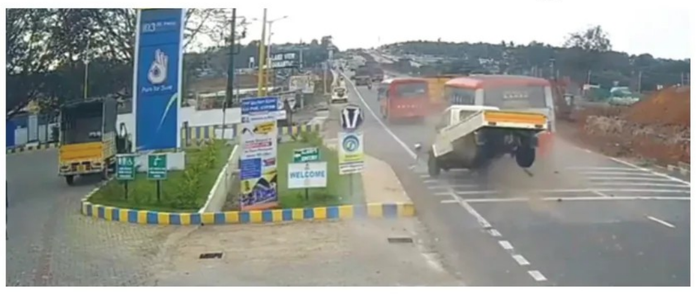
The baseline assessment, which marked the first stage of evaluation, was conducted at the school level on November 3 and 4. Following this, classroom-level implementation began across the district. Nearly 25,000 students from government primary schools are currently benefiting from the programme, making it one of the most extensive learning interventions in the district.

To ensure quality implementation, special workshops on monitoring, guidance, and review mechanisms were organised for cluster, taluk, and district-level officials on November 7. These sessions focused on objectives, processes, and monitoring models. During the first week of November, cluster-level officers conducted school visits to review baseline assessments and shared findings with district authorities. Priority-based classroom visits were also undertaken by district and taluk-level officials to support teachers during implementation.

A Bolero pick-up crashed into a KSRTC bus near Nelamangala, with the driver escaping unhurt despite impact.

Bolero Pick-up Rams KSRTC Bus from Behind near Nelamangala

NELAMANGALA



A Bolero pick-up vehicle collided with a Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) bus from behind near Kerekathaginur Gate in Nelamangala taluk after the driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle. The incident, which occurred two days ago, came to light only later after CCTV footage of the accident surfaced. The mishap took place on the Tumkur–Bengaluru National Highway, where vehicles are currently being allowed to move on a single track due to ongoing road widening and repair works. According to preliminary information, traffic congestion and narrowed carriageways caused by the construction activity may have contributed to the accident.

Sources said the KSRTC bus was moving slowly along the designated single lane when the Bolero pick-up, approaching from behind, failed to maintain control and rammed into the rear of the bus. The impact caused momentary panic among passengers in the bus and other road users. However, no injuries were reported among bus passengers. In a remarkable escape, the Bolero pick-up driver emerged unhurt from the accident, despite the visible damage to the vehicle. The CCTV footage, which later went viral on social media, shows the pick-up vehicle hitting the bus at considerable speed, highlighting the risks posed by narrow lanes and sudden traffic slowdowns in construction zones. The incident occurred near Nelamangala, a key transit point on the busy highway connecting Tumakuru and Bengaluru. The stretch has witnessed several minor and major accidents in recent months due to diversion of traffic onto single lanes. Officials said that since no casualties were reported, the matter did not immediately draw attention. However, after the CCTV visuals emerged, traffic police reviewed the incident and reiterated the need for caution while driving through roadwork zones. Drivers have been advised to slow down, maintain safe distance, and strictly follow traffic signage and instructions from highway authorities.

'Maintain Restraint While Speaking on HDK'

RAMANAGARA

Senior political leader Shivalingayya cautioned leaders and party workers to maintain restraint and dignity while speaking about H. D. Kumaraswamy, stressing that irresponsible remarks only lower the quality of public discourse. He made these remarks while addressing the media in Ramanagara.

Referring to recent political statements and verbal exchanges surrounding Kumaraswamy, Shivalingayya said that criticism in a democracy should always be issue-based and respectful. There is no objection to expressing differences of opinion, but words must be chosen carefully. When talking about a senior leader like Kumaraswamy, everyone should keep their language under control, he said. He observed that Kumaraswamy has held constitutional positions and has contributed significantly to Karnataka's political landscape. Even those who oppose his ideology or policies should acknowledge his experience and public service.

Scientific Dairy Farming Training on Jan 20 to 21

CHITRADURGA

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services will organise a two-day scientific dairy farming training programme for farmers in Chitradurga from January 20 to 21. The training will be conducted at the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Training Centre located within the premises of the veterinary hospital near the main post office in the city.

According to officials, the programme is aimed at equipping farmers with scientific knowledge and practical skills related to modern dairy farming practices. The training will focus on improving milk productivity, animal health management, balanced feeding practices, breeding techniques, disease prevention, and overall farm management. By adopting scientific methods, farmers can enhance income generation and ensure sustainable dairy farming.

The training programme is specifically designed for farmers interested in taking up or improving dairy farming as a livelihood activity. Officials said that a target of 25 participants has been fixed for the programme to ensure effective interaction and hands-on learning. Selection will be on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to eligibility and submission of required documents.

It has been clarified that no stipend or incentive will be provided to participants attending the training. Interested farmers are required to bring a photocopy of their Aadhaar card, two passport-size photographs, and a copy of their bank passbook at the time of registration. Farmers belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes must additionally submit a photocopy of their caste certificate to be eligible for participation.

Applications Invited for Translators to Assist POCSO Cases

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The district administration in Chikkaballapur district has invited applications to engage translators to assist in handling cases registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The move aims to ensure accurate translation of statements given by children below 18 years of age who are lodged in registered child care institutions and are produced before the Child Welfare Committee.

According to an official notification issued on January 17, translators are required to translate statements of children who speak Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, or Telugu into Kannada. One translator will be engaged for translating from Hindi/Urdu to Kannada, while another will be appointed for translating from Tamil/Telugu to Kannada. These translations are essential for effective communication with the police, courts, and the Child Welfare Committee during investigation and legal proceedings.

The district authorities have stated that the selected translators will be required to translate children's statements and submit translated reports to the police, judiciary, and the Child Welfare Committee concerned. For their services, translators will be paid an honorarium of ₹1,000 per case, subject to submission of the required translation work as per norms.

Eligibility criteria specify that applicants must have passed at least SSLC, II PUC, or a degree course. In addition, candidates must possess proficiency and language expertise in Hindi/Urdu or Tamil/Telugu along with Kannada. Applicants should preferably be residents of Chikkaballapur district or neighbouring districts to ensure availability and timely service.

The last date for submission of applications is February 19, 2026, by 5.00 pm. Officials stressed that applications received after the deadline will not be considered. The engagement of qualified translators is seen as a crucial step in safeguarding the rights of children involved in sensitive POCSO cases, ensuring that their statements are accurately recorded without any language barriers.

DEVANAHALLI FATAL CRASH

THREE YOUTHS KILLED IN FATAL BIKE–LORRY COLLISION

DEVANAHALLI

A tragic road accident claimed the lives of three youths at Agalakote Cross in Devanahalli. The incident occurred when a motorcycle carrying the trio reportedly hit the road divider and then rammed into an oncoming lorry, resulting in instantaneous fatalities.

According to police sources, the motorcycle was travelling at high speed when the rider lost control near Agalakote Cross. After striking the central divider, the bike veered into the opposite lane and collided head-on with a lorry approaching from the other direction. The impact was severe, leaving no chance for survival, officials said.

The accident took place on a busy stretch of road within Devanahalli taluk of Bengaluru Rural district, an area that witnesses frequent vehicular movement, including heavy vehicles. Eyewitnesses stated that the crash was sudden and violent, causing panic among motorists and passersby in the vicinity. Police and emergency services rushed to the spot soon after receiving information. Traffic was temporarily halted to facilitate rescue operations and to clear the damaged vehicles from the roadway. The bodies of the deceased were shifted for post-mortem examination, while efforts were made to identify the victims and inform their families.

Preliminary investigation suggests overspeeding as a possible cause of the accident. However, police said that all angles, including road conditions, visibility, and possible mechanical failure, are being examined. A case has been registered at the Devanahalli police station, and further investigation is underway. Local residents have expressed concern over recurring accidents at Agalakote Cross, alleging that inadequate signage, poor lighting, and frequent speeding contribute to such incidents. They urged authorities to implement stricter traffic control measures, install warning signs, and improve road safety infrastructure at accident-prone locations.

Traffic police officials reiterated the importance of adhering to speed limits and lane discipline, especially on highways and junctions with dividers. "Crossing dividers and overspeeding can prove fatal not only to riders but also to other road users," an official said.

QUICK READ

First Look of 'Palegiri Chalana' Unveiled by Junior Seer

TUMAKURU

The first look poster of the Kannada motion picture Palegiri Chalana was formally unveiled at the revered Siddaganga Mutt in Tumakuru, lending the event spiritual significance and cultural prominence. The unveiling was carried out by the junior seer of the mutt in the presence of film unit members, devotees, and invited guests. The event was held in a devotional and dignified atmosphere at the mutt premises, which is widely known for its contributions to education, social service, and cultural preservation in Karnataka. The presence of the junior seer added a sense of blessing and encouragement to the creative team behind the film, who expressed gratitude for the opportunity to launch the first look at such a respected spiritual centre.

Congress Seeks Amicable Settlement in Sidlaghatta

SIDLAGHATTA

A senior Congress leader has extended a call for compromise and amicable settlement to the father of Amruth Gowda, seeking to defuse prevailing tensions and restore harmony in Sidlaghatta. The appeal was made during a local-level interaction, highlighting the party's intent to resolve disputes through dialogue rather than confrontation. The incident took place in Sidlaghatta, where political and social discussions have recently intensified following developments linked to Amruth Gowda. Addressing the media, the Congress leader emphasised that misunderstandings and differences should be settled through mutual discussion, keeping in mind social harmony and public interest.

DC Calls for Voter Pledge Ahead of National Voters' Day

Chitradurga District Collector urges officials and students to reaffirm democratic values by taking the voter pledge

CHITRADURGA

Chitradurga District Collector T. Venkatesh has called upon all government departments, schools, and colleges across the district to organise a voter pledge ceremony on January 23 as part of the National Voters' Day celebrations. The initiative aims to strengthen democratic participation and reinforce the importance of voting among citizens, especially young and first-time voters.

Addressing the media in Chitradurga on January 17, the District Collector said that National Voters' Day is observed annually on January 25 across the country. In line with the Election Commission of India's guidelines, the district will mark the occasion this year as well, with a special focus on administering the voter pledge two days in advance, on January 23. He emphasised that the pledge should be conducted uniformly in all government offices and educational institutions within the district.

This year marks the 16th National Voters' Day, which will be celebrated with the central theme My India, My Vote, carrying the tagline Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy. The theme highlights the pivotal role of citizens in sustaining and strengthening India's democratic framework. According to the District Collector, the message underlines that democracy thrives only when citizens actively exercise their right to vote in a free, fair, and informed manner. The District Collector further clarified that, as in previous years, no additional programmes are mandated beyond the official observance of National Voters' Day on January 25 and the voter pledge ceremony on January 23. He instructed all department heads to ensure that officers and staff members participate in the pledge, strictly following the format prescribed by the Election Commission of India. Educational institutions, including schools and colleges, have also been directed to involve students in the pledge-taking exercise to instil democratic values at an early age.

HC Advocate Alleges Misuse of Caste Certificates

TUMAKURU

Serious allegations have emerged in Tumakuru over non-eligible communities misusing Handa Jogis caste certificates to claim benefits.

Tumakuru witnessed a fresh controversy on caste-based entitlements after a High Court advocate alleged large-scale misuse of caste certificates meant for the Handa Jogis community by people belonging to other castes. The allegations were made by Manjunath during a press interaction held in the city. Speaking to mediapersons in Tumakuru, the advocate claimed that individuals who do not belong to the Handa Jogis community have allegedly obtained caste certificates fraudulently and are availing various government welfare schemes. He said such practices are depriving genuine beneficiaries of constitutional safeguards and state-sponsored facilities meant specifically for marginalised communities.

According to the advocate, caste certificates issued to the Handa Jogis community carry significant importance, as they enable access to reservations in education, government jobs, housing schemes, scholarships, and other welfare programmes. He alleged that due to administrative lapses and lack of strict verification mechanisms, several ineligible persons have managed to procure these certificates, thereby unlawfully cornering benefits. He further stated that the issue has been persisting for several years and has now reached alarming proportions. Despite repeated complaints and representations to the authorities, no concrete action has allegedly been taken to rectify the situation. The advocate accused certain officials of negligence and demanded a thorough inquiry into the issuance of caste certificates in the district. Calling the matter a serious social injustice, he said that the genuine members of the Handa Jogis community are being pushed further into economic and social hardship. Government welfare schemes are designed to uplift the most disadvantaged sections. When these benefits are misappropriated, it defeats the very purpose of social justice, he remarked. The advocate urged the district administration to immediately conduct a comprehensive verification drive of caste certificates issued under the Handa Jogis category. He also demanded cancellation of fraudulently obtained certificates and initiation of legal action against those found guilty, including officials involved in issuing such documents without due diligence. He warned that if corrective measures are not taken at the earliest, he would approach the judiciary seeking strict directions to protect the rights of the genuine community members.

Leopard Caught in Forest Dept Trap Near Alilu Ghat

TUMAKURU : A leopard was caught in a cage laid by the Forest Department near Alilu Ghat on the outskirts of Gubbi, creating relief among local residents who had been living in fear for the past several days. The incident occurred after forest officials intensified surveillance following repeated reports of leopard movement in the area. According to forest department sources, the leopard had been frequently sighted near agricultural fields and human settlements close to Alilu Ghat, raising concerns about possible human-animal conflict. Villagers had reported cattle movement disturbances and paw marks, prompting the department to take precautionary measures. As part of these efforts, a trap cage was installed at a strategic location based on the animal's movement pattern. Early on the day of the incident, forest staff found the leopard safely trapped inside the cage during routine monitoring. Officials immediately secured the area to prevent crowds from gathering and to ensure the safety of both the animal and the public. Veterinary experts were called in to examine the leopard's health before initiating further action. Forest officials said the leopard appeared to be in stable condition and showed no visible injuries. After preliminary medical checks, the animal was shifted following standard wildlife protocols.

National Lok Adalat in Chitradurga on March 14

CHITRADURGA

The first National Lok Adalat of the year 2026 will be organised on March 14, the second Saturday of the month, with a strong focus on resolving a maximum number of cases through compromise and mediation. This was announced by Ron Vasudev, Principal District and Sessions Judge and Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority, during a press conference held on January 17.

Speaking at the Mediation Centre of the District Court in Chitradurga, the district judge said the National Lok Adalat would be conducted not only at the district headquarters but also across all taluk centres. He encouraged litigants and the general public to actively participate and take advantage of the platform to resolve long-pending disputes in an amicable, speedy, and cost-effective manner. Highlighting past achievements, he said that during the mega Lok Adalat held in December 2025, a total of 79,477 cases were disposed of in the district. This included 3,840 pending court cases and 75,637 pre-litigation matters. He noted that many disputes reach courts due to minor misunderstandings, and with humane intervention and legal awareness, reconciliation becomes possible. As a significant outcome, seven couples who had filed for divorce were reunited through mediation within the district judiciary's jurisdiction.

Along with the upcoming Lok Adalat, the district has also launched the special campaign Mediation for the Nation – 2.0. The campaign, which began on January 2 and will continue till the end of January, aims to identify mediation-worthy cases and resolve them through mediation centres. As many as 42 trained mediators are assisting parties across 24 courts in the district, ensuring that settlements reached are legally sound and formally approved by courts. The judge also expressed concern over the rising number of POCSO cases in the district, stressing the need for greater legal awareness among youth and communities despite ongoing awareness efforts at village and taluk levels.

State Govt Employees' Annual Sports Meet

CHITRADURGA

The annual sports meet and cultural competitions for state government employees will be held in Chitradurga on January 27 and 28, with organisers announcing that registrations will be accepted strictly through online mode. The two-day event is being jointly organised by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports, and the Karnataka State Government Employees' Association, Chitradurga district unit. The competitions will take place at the Veera Vanite Onake Obavva Sports Stadium in Chitradurga.

Addressing the media, Malatesh Muddagji, District President of the Karnataka State Government Employees' Association, said that all permanent state government employees are eligible to participate in the events. He added that January 22 has been fixed as the last date for submitting details and completing online registration through the designated link. The annual meet will feature separate competitions for men and women, categorised by age groups. In the sports section, women participants will compete in volleyball, kabaddi, table tennis, tennis, shuttle badminton, chess, tenni-coit, throwball, yoga, and kho-kho.

Protests Will Not Intimidate Me: MLA

RAMANAGARA

Ramanagara MLA Balakrishna on Saturday made a strong statement, asserting that attempts to block him or stage protests directly in front of him would have no impact on his resolve. Speaking to the media in Ramanagara, the legislator said that democratic dissent is acceptable, but intimidation through obstructionist protests would not achieve any outcome.

Responding to recent developments in the city, the MLA remarked that he remains unfazed by demonstrations aimed at pressuring him. If someone thinks that stopping me on the road or protesting in front of me will change my stand, that will not happen, he said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, **Tazmiya Banu**, one original register sale dated **27-05-2019** in respect of the property PID **No.152100702100101344**, property No.381 396 598 8/A measuring 6.096 X 9.144 meters the said property situated at Kodiyala Village, Arakere Hobli, Srirangapatna Taluk as document No.**SRP-1-101227- 2019-20** and another registered sale deed dated 24-03- 2017 in respect of the same said property as document No.**SRP-1-06671-2016-17** was lost on dated 16-01-2026 at Kodiyala in this connection I intimated the concerned Police, if any one trace please intimates me or said Police within 7 days.

M.Guruprasad
Advocate, No.2,
M.Lingaiah Building,
V.V.Road, Mandya-571401.
Mob:**9242221603**.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

NAME CHANGE

I, **HOOR SHAIR,** W/o Anees Ul Haque, resident of No. 11, P K House, 9th Main, Ex Servicemen Colony, Vasanthnagar, Bengaluru-560001, have changed my name to **HOOR SAHER,** vide affidavit dated: 17.01.2026, before Notary G. DAYANANDA, Bangalore.

MYSORE MEDICAL COLLEGE & RESEARCH INSTITUTE
(An Autonomous Institute of Government of Karnataka)
Irwin Road, Mysore-570001, Phone No. :+91-0821-2520512 (Off.), 2520803 (Fax)
Website: www.mmcri/karnataka.gov.in/, E-mail: mmcrimysore@yahoo.com

No. Equipment/32/2025-26 Date: 16.01.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Sub: Invitation of Tender for the supply of Equipments to the Dept. of Surgery, K.R. Hospital, MMC&RI, Mysuru

The Tender has been invited as per Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements Act 1999 for the supply of Equipments to the Dept. of Surgery, K.R. Hospital, MMC&RI, Mysuru. The Tender documents may be downloaded from E-procurement website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** from **17.01.2026** and last date for submission of Tenders through E-procurement website is **16.02.2026 upto 5.00 PM.** Those tenders which are not submitted with E.M.D. will be rejected.

If, the last date for submission of Tender treated as holiday, the next working day will be considered as last date. No Notification in this regard will be announced.

Sd/- Director and Dean
Mysore Medical College & Research Institute, Mysore

DIPR/MYSORE/SHIRDISAI/1519/2025-26

ನಗರಸಭಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ
ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ– 562114
ಸಹಾಯವಾಣಿ : 27931759, ದೂರವಾಣಿ : 27931221,
Email: itstaff_ulb_hosakote@yahoo.com Web Site.www.hosakotecity.mrc.gov.in

ನಂ:ನಸಹೊ/ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಶಾಖೆ/ಟೆಂಡರ್/ಸಿಆರ್/11/2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 17.01.2026

"ಮರು ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ" (ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಕೆ.ಟಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ. ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ)

ಪೌರಾಯುಕ್ತರು ನಗರಸಭೆ ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ ಇವರಿಂದ 2025–26ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಅಮೃತ್–2.0 ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸ್ಟ್ಯಾಂಡರ್ಡ್ ಡಾಕ್ಯುಮೆಂಟ್ 02ರ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ದ್ವಿ–ಲಕೋಟೆ ಪದ್ಧತಿಯಡಿ ಅರ್ಹ ದರ್ಜೆಯ ನೋಂದಾಯಿತ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರಿಂದ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಮರು ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಕರೆಯಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

ಕ್ರ. ಸಂ	ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ವಿವರ	ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ.ಲಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)
01	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT47899/call-3	49.82

1) ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ **27.01.2026 ರ ಸಂಜೆ 5:30** ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ **29.01.2026 ರ ಬೆಳಗ್ಗೆ 11:00 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ** ನಿಗದಿಪಡಿಸಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

2)ಟೆಂಡರ್ ದಾಖಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/#/portal/portal-home** ನಿಂದ ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದು.

ಸಹಿ/– ಪೌರಾಯುಕ್ತರು
ನಗರಸಭೆ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ

ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ವಾ.ಪ್ರ/5080/ಶಿರಡಿಸಾಯಿ/2025–26

Government of Karnataka
PUBLIC WORKS, DEPARTMENT
Office of the Executive Engineer,
Chamarajanagara Division, Chamarajanagara

E-mail: eecnr@kpwd.gov.in/ pwdeechngr@gmail.com Phone/Fax: 08226-222027

BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through Kppp.karnataka.gov.in portal only)
H(Two Cover System: Section-1-Technical Bid and Section-2-Financial Bid)
Short Term Tender Notification No 30/2025-26 Dated: 17.01.2026 (Call-1, 2 & Call-6)

Item rate tenders are invited through Kppp.karnataka.gov.in portal only on behalf of Governer of Karnataka from Eligible registered civil Contractor in KPWD in Standard Bid document **KW-4** form The Total no of works is 1, **H/A :- 8443** DC Works maximum estimated cost is Rs, 270.00 lakhs, **AND** The Total no of works is 2, **H/A :- 5054-04-337-0-01- ORF Works** Minimum estimated cost is Rs, 500.00 lakhs, maximum estimated cost is Rs, 750.00 lakhs,Further changes in this Notification will be Published in Kppp.karnataka.gov.in Only. Date of events as follows:

1	Date and Time for downloading the tender document from the **Kppp.karnataka.gov.in** portal	From 17.01.2026 to 27.01.2026 upto 16.00 Hrs.
2	Pre-Bid Meeting Date	21.01.2026 in Division Office Meeting Hall at 11.00 AM
3	downloading the tender document from the Last Date and Time	27.01.2026 Up to 16.00 Hrs.
4	Date & Time for opening of Technical bid	28.01.2026 after 16.30 Hrs.
5	Date & Time for opening of Financial bid	30.01.2026 Morning 11.00 AM

More information can be had from the website: **https://www.Kppp.karnataka.gov.in** & Any other details required can be obtained from office of the under signed during office hours.

Executive Engineer,
PWD Division,
Chamarajanagar.

NO: DIPR: CHANAGAR:649:2025-26

ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ,
ಲೋಕೋಪಯೋಗಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಕೆ.ಆರ್. ವೃತ್ತ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು.

ಸಂ: ಕಾ.ಇಂ(ವಿ)/ಲೋ.ಇ/ವಿದ್ಯುತ್/2025–26/2506 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 16.01.2026

ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರರು (ವಿದ್ಯುತ್), ಲೋಕೋಪಯೋಗಿ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಇವರ ವತಿಯಿಂದ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳನ್ನು KW-1 & 2 STD ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ ಮೊದಲನೆ ಕರೆಯನ್ನು ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ ಮೂಲಕ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ವಿವರ ಕೆಳಕಂಡಂತಿವೆ.

ಕ್ರ. ಸಂ.	ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಯ ಹೆಸರು	ಟೆಂಡರಿಗಿಟ್ಟ ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ. ಲಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)
1	Shifting of HT/LT Line, LT line and DTC Center from Tarikere Taluk Office to RTO Office and Yamaha Showroom to US Convention Hall at Tarikere. PWD/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT28924.	24.21
2	Shifting of HT & LT Line and DTC, GOS Structure from Holehonnuru Circle to Shiva Temple old Seegebagi at Bhadravathi Tq., Shivamogga Dist. PWD/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT29077.	14.72
3	Shifting of HT Line, LT Line and DTC Center from Tarikere US Convention hall to Haliyur Channel at Tarikere. PWD/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT29095.	6.51

ಮೇಲಿನ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಲು ಇಚ್ಛಿಸುವವರು ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** ನಲ್ಲಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಡಾಕ್ಯುಮೆಂಟ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು **ದಿನಾಂಕ: 07.01.2026 ರಿಂದ 21.01.2026, 16.00 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ** ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳಬಹುದು ಹಾಗೂ ಭರ್ತಿ ಮಾಡಿದ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಹಿಂತಿರುಗಿಸುವ **ದಿನಾಂಕ: 21.01.2026 ರಂದೆ 16.00 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ** ನಿಗದಿಪಡಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು KPPP ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳಿಗೆ ಈ ಕೆಳಗೆ ಸಹಿ ಮಾಡಿರುವ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಕಛೇರಿಯನ್ನು ಕೆಲಸದ ವೇಳೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬಹುದು.

ಸಹಿ/– ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರರು(ವಿ).

ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ಉನಿ–ಪಿ.ಪಿ/5078/ಕೆವಿಸ್‌ಎಂಪಿಎ/2025–26

Govt. of Karnataka
Command Area Development Authority
Cauvery Basin Project-Mysuru
O/o Executive Enngineer, No.02 Division, CADA,
CBP Vijayanagara 1st Stage Mysuru-17
E-Mail: eecada2mysore@gmail.com Phone: 0821-2414090

SHORT-TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
No: 22/2025-26 Dated: 14.01.2026 (Through KPP Portal only) Call-2

On behalf of the Administrator, CADA, CBP, Mysore, The Executive Engineer, CADA No.2 Division, CBP, Mysuru has invited tender in Two Tender Document system for 01 Atchkat Road work in Chamarajanagara Taluk and 01 Atchkat Road work in Kollegala Taluk as per Standard Tender Document KW-4 from eligible tenderers through KPPP Portal. Interested bidders may access bidding documents from **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or contact this office during working hours. The tenderers can download the tender documents from 14.01.2026. The last date for submission of Technical and Financial Bid is 22.01.2026 upto 4:00 PM. Date of opening of Technical Bid is 23.01.2026 4:30 onwards and Financial Bid will be opened after obtaining approval of Technical Bid from competent Authority. For more Conditions & details Visit the website **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Note: If there are any corrections/ modifications, it will be published through KPP Portal only.

Executive Engineer,
No.02 Division CADA,
CBP, Mysuru

No: DIPRICHANAGAR: 643:2025-26

QUICK READ

Murshidabad Protests Block Highway And Railway Lines

Kolkata

Murshidabad district in West Bengal witnessed fresh unrest on Saturday as protesters blocked National Highway-12 and railway tracks at Beldanga. Hundreds gathered at Barua More, halting traffic and stranding vehicles. The agitation erupted after news of migrant worker Anisur Sheikh being assaulted in Bihar revived anger over Friday's death of Alauddin Sheikh. Police deployed a strong contingent, while local MLA Humayun Kabir held talks with demonstrators. Authorities worked to restore order and prevent further violence in the area.

Kerala Court Submits Temple Gold Report To SIT

Kollam

A vigilance court in Kollam has handed over a scientific report on the gold cladding of Lord Ayyappa temple artefacts to the SIT. Prepared by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, the report was submitted in a sealed cover and relates to the Sabarimala gold loss cases. The SIT will update the Kerala High Court on Monday, after which further action will follow. The probe has already led to 12 arrests, including main accused Unnikrishnan Potty and former temple board presidents.

Disqualified LDF MLA Antony Raju Appeals Conviction Case

Thiruvananthapuram

Disqualified LDF MLA Antony Raju has filed an appeal against his conviction in an evidence tampering case before the Thiruvananthapuram District Sessions Court. The court posted the matter to January 24. Raju, sentenced to three years' imprisonment by a magistrate for tampering with evidence in a 1990 drug case, claimed he did not receive a fair trial. The case also involved former court clerk K S Jose. The SIT and vigilance probe revealed Raju and Jose had allegedly tampered with key evidence.

PM Modi Highlights Infiltration Challenge At Malda Rally

PM Modi inaugurates rail and road projects in WB valued at more than ₹3,250 crore

Continued from page 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a large rally in Malda, highlighting illegal infiltration as a major challenge for West Bengal, while reassuring refugees and promising strict action against infiltrators once the BJP comes to power.

Speaking at the Muslim-majority district, Modi alleged that illegal migration had changed Bengal's demography, triggered riots, and thrived under the ruling TMC's patronage. He criticized the TMC for corruption, blocking welfare schemes, and preventing benefits like free electricity and Ayushman Bharat health coverage from reaching people. Modi said the party's syndicate system facilitated settlement of infiltrators, and claimed an "alliance between infiltrators and the ruling party."

Assuring refugees such as the politically significant Matua community, he said they need not worry, reiterating BJP's commitment to protect their rights. Modi also promised development for Malda, including boosting the mango economy and creating opportunities for farmers and youth.

He asserted that Bengal, surrounded by BJP-ruled states, was ready for a change, and recalled Bihar's electoral victory as a sign that Bengal would soon give BJP a strong mandate. Emphasizing good governance, Modi accused the TMC of thuggery and mismanagement, claiming central funds meant for the poor were being siphoned.

The Prime Minister called for replacing the current government with a pro-people BJP administration, ensuring welfare benefits and restoring development in the state. Highlighting recent electoral gains in other states, he expressed confidence that the people of Bengal would support the BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated rail and road projects worth Rs 3,250 crore to boost connectivity and development in West Bengal and the North East. At Malda, he flagged off four Amrit Bharat Express trains and India's first Vande Bharat sleeper trains between Howrah and Guwahati, expected to cut travel time by 2.5 hours and enhance mobility for citizens.

Satheesan Criticizes Kerala CM Over Communal Remarks

KOCHI

Congress leader V D Satheesan on Saturday sharply criticized Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for making "communal remarks" at a Muslim organisation's event, accusing the CPI(M) of following the Sangh Parivar's divisive path. The comments came during Vijayan's speech at the 'Kerala Yatra' organised by the Kerala Muslim Jamaat.

Satheesan argued that several communal clashes occurred under previous CPI(M) leaders, including V S Achuthanandan and Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, who served as Chief Minister and Home Minister respectively. He said Vijayan's remarks were an attempt to portray himself as a secular leader while maintaining ties with individuals spreading communal hatred, apparently referring to SNDP leader Vellappally Natesan, who faced criticism for remarks against minorities.

"The CPI(M) is adopting the Sangh Parivar's strategy by creating conflicts between communities to gain political advantage," Satheesan said. He added that it was necessary to respond when the Chief Minister and his party frequently speak about secularism while reportedly promoting divisive activities.

The criticism follows Vijayan's earlier statement warning that secularism and constitutional values are under threat in India. In his address, the Chief Minister claimed that communal riots have ended in Kerala due to the Left Democratic Front's firm stance against communalism.

Tourist arrivals in J&K are rising after the Pahalgam attack, as the govt plans new destinations and sustainable strategies to boost the region's tourism sector

J&K Tourism Recovers, New Destinations Being Developed

JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir's tourism sector, hit hard by the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack and subsequent floods, is showing signs of recovery, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo said on Friday. With improving weather, tourist arrivals are gradually increasing, he added, highlighting efforts to revive the industry and plan for sustainable growth.

Dulloo said a major project has been conceptualised to promote sustainable tourism in emerging destinations, aiming to reduce pressure on traditional hotspots and evenly distribute tourist footfall. "Developing new destinations will create employment, improve infrastructure, attract investment, and ease seasonal tourism peaks," he said. Following the Pahalgam attack, around 50 tourist spots and

resorts had been closed for security, but many have now reopened, with more set to open after security audits.

The SPREAD initiative, implemented with support from the Department of Economic Affairs and the Economic Reconstruction Agency, will focus on infrastructure, waste management, ecological conservation, and livelihood generation. Community engagement and private sector participation are central to the initiative, ensuring a balance between economy, ecology, and equity.

Dulloo also emphasised leveraging digital platforms and social media to attract national and international tourists. He suggested converting rising pilgrim numbers in Jammu into longer stays by promoting leisure, heritage, adventure, and spiritual attractions beyond the main pilgrimage circuits.

Highlighting J&K's potential as a year-round destination, he said adventure activities such as rafting, paragliding, bungee jumping, and water sports would help position the region as a tourism hub while providing significant employment opportunities for local youth.

The government continues to reassess its tourism strategy to ensure infrastructure and services meet growing visitor numbers, while focusing on holistic development and sustainable tourism across both Jammu and Kashmir regions.

KT Rama Rao Slams Telangana Government Over Journalist Arrests

HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao on Friday condemned the arrest of two journalists by Telangana police, alleging that the current administration has turned the state into a "circus." Rao said, "Elect a clown and see the circus. Journalists are being treated like terrorists, and even peaceful protesters face arrest. Under Congress rule, no progress can be seen."

Rao's remarks come amid political controversies involving the disqualification of BRS legislators who allegedly

switched to Congress after the 2023 elections. Recently, Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar cleared two BRS MLAs—Banswada's Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and Chevella's Kale Yadaiah—citing lack of evidence of defection. Earlier, five other BRS MLAs had also been cleared, while three cases—Danam Nagender, Kadiam Srihari, and M Sanjay Kumar—remain pending.

Telangana BJP president N Ramchander Rao criticized the defection as a "jolt" to the democratic process, calling it unconstitutional. The BRS has questioned the Speaker's decision and plans to appeal to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court, noting decisions on seven cases, has given the Speaker a final two-week deadline to resolve the remaining three petitions. The Court warned that non-compliance could lead to contempt proceedings.

Akhilesh Yadav Meets Patnaik, Proposes Anti-BJP Front

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav met BJD leader Naveen Patnaik in Odisha, discussing strategies to challenge the BJP, improve healthcare, and address electoral and economic issues

BHUBANESWAR

Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav met Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief Naveen Patnaik in Odisha on Friday, describing it as a casual meeting, but it has sparked speculation about a potential "anti-BJP" alliance. Speaking in Bhubaneswar on Saturday, Akhilesh called Patnaik a senior, respected leader committed to public welfare and said the discussion focused on sharing political concerns.

Akhilesh stated, "Two former chief ministers met and shared their grievances and decided to unseat the BJP," without elaborating on specifics. He highlighted universal healthcare, saying a "healthy India" should be a national mission. Criticising the Ayushman Bharat scheme, he argued that treatment caps and card-based limits prevent poor families from accessing full care. He demanded free treatment for serious illnesses like cancer, liver, or kidney disease in government hospitals without budget restrictions. He also suggested using artificial intelligence and telemedicine to improve rural healthcare.

The SP leader accused the Union government of misusing central agencies such as the ED, CBI, and IT Department to target opposition politicians and independent media. He alleged that communal tensions were exploited for political gain, citing experiences in Uttar Pradesh.

Akhilesh also raised concerns over electoral transparency, claiming that about three crore voters were removed from rolls in Uttar Pradesh. He announced plans to approach the Supreme Court to verify the accuracy of voter lists and expressed doubts about electronic voting machines, noting that countries like Germany and Japan do not use them.

On the economy, he questioned the government's claim of doubling farmers' income, citing rising fertiliser, pesticide, and electricity costs. He urged strict environmental impact assessments for industries, emphasising that industrial growth should not compromise public health or welfare.

Tamil Nadu CM Offers Job To Top Jallikattu Tamer

MADURAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Saturday announced that the participant who tames the highest number of bulls in the traditional Jallikattu competition at Alanganallur will be offered a suitable government job in the Animal Husbandry Department.

Speaking at the event, Stalin said, "Madurai is a land where valour has flourished. Under the Dravidian administration, we have built the Kalaignar Centenary Library and the Kalaignar Centenary Jallikattu Arena in Madurai. This is a great achievement."

The Chief Minister arrived at Alanganallur to witness the centuries-old sport, which is celebrated during the Mattu Pongal festival. Jallikattu, derived from the Tamil words "Jalli" (coins) and "Kattu" (tied), involves releasing a bull into a crowd while participants attempt to tame it by holding onto its hump and retrieving coins tied to its horns. Pulikulam and Kangayam breeds are used for the sport.

Bulls that perform well are highly valued and fetch high prices in the market.

Ahead of Stalin's arrival, extensive preparations were made to ensure safety. Medical facilities, animal health checks, and security arrangements were put in place to protect both participants and bulls. The Chief Minister praised the traditional sport and highlighted the government's efforts to preserve cultural heritage while promoting safety and recognition for participants.

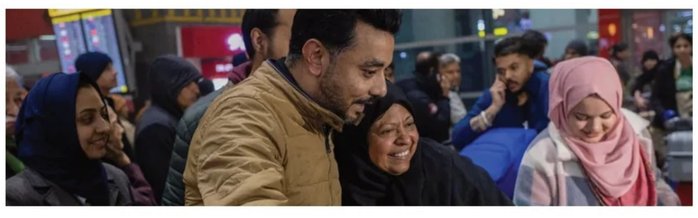
The announcement of a government job for the top tamer adds an incentive for participants and underscores the state government's commitment to valuing skill and bravery in traditional sports.

Several Indians Return Safely From Protest-Hit Iran

NEW DELHI

Several Indians, including students, returned to India on commercial flights from Iran late Friday night amid widespread protests and Tehran's violent crackdown, which has reportedly killed over 2,500 people. The exact number of returning Indians was not immediately known.

Ali Naqui, part of a group of 12–13 travellers, said they faced no difficulties during their stay. "We have returned from Tehran after eight days. Earlier, we were in Iraq before travelling to Iran,". A young medical student in Shiraz said the Internet was down, so they were unaware of nationwide events, but her city was "fine," and the group arranged their return independently, without government assistance.



Relatives gathered at Delhi airport to receive returning travellers. Abbas Qazmi, whose mother and aunt returned, said initial anxiety over the situation eased once communication resumed. "We had registered with the embassy and were following instructions. My mother's flight was scheduled, so everything went smoothly," he said.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said approximately 9,000 Indians currently live in Iran, mainly students, along with sailors, pilgrims, and business personnel. The ministry has issued multiple advisories urging citizens not to travel to Iran and advising those in the country to leave via commercial flights, which are still operating.

The ministry is closely monitoring developments to safeguard Indian nationals. Iran has faced widespread protests in recent weeks over inflation, currency devaluation, and political demands, which have spread across all 31 provinces, transforming an economic agitation into a broader call for change.

ALCOHOL BENEFITS

Bihar Alcohol Ban Improves Diet, Reduces Junk

NEW DELHI

The 2016 alcohol prohibition in Bihar has led to healthier diets, with increased intake of calories, protein, and good fats, according to a study by IIT Kanpur. Researchers found that households redirected money previously spent on alcohol toward nutritious foods like pulses, dairy products, and nut-based oils, while consumption of packaged and processed foods declined.

The study, published in Agricultural Economics, analyzed household data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (2011–12 and 2022–23) and compared Bihar with neighbouring states—Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and West

Bengal. The researchers used statistical matching techniques and robustness checks to confirm the findings.

Vinayak Krishnatri of IIT Kanpur noted that reduced alcohol use not only freed household resources but also led to lower marital conflict, improved family stability, and prioritization of nutritious food. Urban areas showed stronger dietary gains, likely due to stricter enforcement of the ban.

Importantly, the study revealed an increase in protein intake in a state where diets are traditionally cereal-heavy, and a shift from cheap, unhealthy fats to higher-quality cooking oils, improving overall diet quality. Contrary to concerns, savings from alcohol avoidance were not spent on unhealthy foods.

Prof. Sukumar Vellakkal, co-author, said the ban generated unintended health benefits, improving household nutrition. "We show that the prohibition led to meaningful improvements in diet quality by shifting spending from alcohol to food," he added.

The Bihar alcohol ban, originally aimed at reducing domestic violence and social harms, has thus had the added benefit of promoting healthier eating patterns and better nutrition among residents, according to the IIT Kanpur research team.

QUICK READ

Ex-Rajasthan Minister Mahendrajit Singh Joins Congress

Jaipur

Former Rajasthan minister Mahendrajit Singh Malviya has rejoined the Congress after quitting the BJP two years ago. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge approved his return following a detailed review by the Rajasthan PCC and the AICC. Malviya, a former MP from Banswara and cabinet minister in the previous Gehlot government, cited difficulties functioning under the BJP and delays in welfare schemes as reasons for his switch. His formal joining is expected soon at the state Congress office.

Jharkhand Bandh By Tribal Groups Sees Mixed Response

Ranchi

A bandh called by tribal organisations in Jharkhand to protest the killing of a village head in Khunti district saw mixed reactions on Saturday. Roads were blocked with burning tyres in districts like Khunti, Simdega, Chaibasa, and Gumla, forcing shops and markets to close and halting public transport. Schools also remained shut in many areas. In Ranchi, the impact was partial, with protesters urging shopkeepers to close and blocking key roads at Karamtoli and Albert Ekka Chowks.

Congress Leader Seeks Mumbai Party Chief's Resignation

Mumbai

After Congress recorded its lowest tally in Mumbai civic polls, calls emerged for city unit chief Varsha Gaikwad's resignation on moral grounds. The party won 24 seats, down from 31 in 2017, in the 227-member BMC. Despite criticism, Mumbai Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant defended the results, calling them satisfactory given "adverse" conditions. Factional tensions within the party resurfaced following the poor performance, putting Gaikwad under pressure ahead of upcoming internal deliberations and debates on leadership accountability.

BMC Results Trigger Shiv Sena Criticism Against BJP

Shiv Sena (UBT) vows to uphold Marathi pride, oppose BJP dominance, and rebuild support before 2029 elections

Continued from page 1

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation election results have sparked intense political debates in Maharashtra, with Shiv Sena (UBT) sharply criticising the BJP and Shinde camp. The BJP-led alliance won 23 of 29 municipal corporations, crossing the 116-seat majority in Mumbai's BMC, paving the way for a BJP Mayor. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut accused Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde of betraying Marathi interests, likening him to Jaichand and claiming his rebellion enabled the BJP's victory.

Raut drew historical parallels, comparing the BJP's rise to the lowering of the Maratha flag at Shaniwar Wada and the British Union Jack being raised. He asserted that the Opposition remains significant, with nearly 110 corporators from Shiv Sena (UBT) and MNS on BMC benches. Raut said the loss of the mayor's post was more than political—it was a blow to Maharashtra and Mumbai.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) reinforced its stance by posting an image of founder Balasaheb Thackeray, stating the struggle to protect Marathi pride would continue. The results ended three decades of Thackeray family dominance in India's wealthiest civic body, marking a milestone for the BJP-led alliance. Despite the setback, Shiv Sena (UBT) plans to mobilise regional pride to rebuild its support ahead of the 2029 Assembly elections.

By invoking historical events and figures, the Uddhav Thackeray-led faction frames the BJP's win as an external takeover facilitated by internal defectors. The BJP is set to assume the Mayor's office, while Shiv Sena (UBT) and MNS are likely to coordinate to form a strong Opposition, challenging the ruling alliance within the BMC and keeping political tensions high in the city.

International Delegates Praise 28th CSPOC Conference

NEW DELHI

International delegates at the 28th CSPOC lauded India's hospitality, dialogue opportunities, and successful organisation, calling the conference a platform for collaboration and learning

The 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) concluded in New Delhi with international delegates praising India's hospitality and efficient organisation. John McFall, Speaker of the UK House of Lords, described it as a "fantastic engagement," appreciating India's warm welcome and efforts, while announcing that the United Kingdom will host the next conference in two years.

Stephen Twigg, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, highlighted the platform for knowledge sharing and dialogue across the Commonwealth, calling the event "amazing" and commending India's Parliament and organising team. South Africa's Deputy Speaker Annelie Lotriet said the conference discussions, including AI, social media, and parliamentary safety, were very informative, adding that her first visit to India was impressive and memorable.

Francis Scarpaleggia, Speaker of Canada's House of Commons, said the event encouraged new friendships and networking, praising the warm reception and organisation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the three-day conference on Thursday, emphasising the importance of strengthening democratic institutions.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla delivered the valedictory address, noting the conference's success and its focus on people-centric governance. During the closing session, he formally handed over the chairmanship of the 29th CSPOC to Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the UK House of Commons, wishing him success for the next conference in London.

The 28th CSPOC highlighted collaboration among Commonwealth nations, fostering dialogue, innovation, and mutual learning, while leaving delegates optimistic about future cooperation and strengthening democratic practices.

ED Arrests Shashank Chopda In Chhattisgarh Medical Scam

RAIPUR

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Shashank Chopda, a partner in M/s Mokshit Corporation, in connection with a major money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in medical equipment procurement in Chhattisgarh. The arrest was made on January 14, 2026, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), and Chopda was presented before the Special Court in Raipur, which granted the ED four days' custody for further questioning.

The investigation arises from FIRs and chargesheets filed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau and Economic Offences Wing against CGMSCL officials, DHS personnel, and private entities, including Mokshit Corporation. Chopda allegedly colluded with officials to manipulate tenders, fabricate demands, and supply medical equipment and reagents at inflated rates, causing heavy losses to the state exchequer while generating illegal profits.

ED officials said the accused used multiple companies, bogus service agreements, and cash withdrawals to launder proceeds of crime. Searches and seizures under Section 17 of PMLA led to freezing or attachment of assets worth over Rs 43 crore, including bank balances, fixed deposits, shares, vehicles, and other properties. Incriminating documents and digital devices reportedly exposed diversion, layering, and concealment of funds.

US Ambassador Sergio Gor met M'rashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis to discuss strengthening cooperation across trade, technology, and strategic sectors

US Ambassador Gor, CM Fadnavis Discuss Strategic Cooperation

MUMBAI

US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, held a detailed meeting with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday, focusing on enhancing bilateral cooperation across key sectors such as trade, investment, technology, manufacturing, energy, health, and entertainment. Gor described the meeting on social media as "fantastic" and highlighted the potential for collaboration, saying, "So much we can do together!"

During the discussion, CM Fadnavis shared flagship projects, including the Navi Mumbai International Edu City, and both sides agreed to deepen the US-Maharashtra partnership. Gor also met Consul General Michael Schreuder and stressed expanding US investments in Maharashtra while supporting Maharashtra-based companies to grow in the United States.

Earlier in the day, Gor held talks with RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra to explore cooperation in the technology sector. He also met N Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Companies, praising the conglomerate's 150-year legacy and strong footprint in the US.

Gor's Mumbai visit follows his recent presentation of credentials to President Droupadi Murmu on January 14. On previous occasions, he has emphasised the enduring friendship between US and Indian leaders, noting the strong personal ties between former President Donald Trump and PM Narendra Modi, while highlighting that strategic partnerships transcend political differences.

The Ambassador's visit to the US Consulate in Mumbai marked the beginning of focused efforts to strengthen India-US ties. Both Gor and Fadnavis expressed commitment to expand cooperation in investments, technology, and strategic initiatives, reflecting mutual interest in fostering economic growth, innovation, and long-term diplomatic relations between the US and Maharashtra.

Speaker Gupta Warns Atishi To Apologise Before House

NEW DELHI

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta on Saturday said AAP leader Atishi still has a final chance to withdraw her remarks and apologise over the alleged insult to a Sikh Guru. He emphasised that the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report, commissioned by the Assembly, confirmed no tampering with audio-video recordings of the House proceedings. The report verified that the official verbatim record matches the original footage, with no manipulation or alterations.

Gupta raised concerns over a parallel forensic examination conducted in Punjab, calling it "questionable" and politically motivated. He said the interim Jalandhar court order, based on the Punjab report, cannot be treated as a final verdict. The Speaker questioned the legality and chain of custody of the evidence examined outside Delhi, stressing that the process did not follow proper procedures.

The Speaker accused Atishi of avoiding the opportunity to clarify her position in the House and said the issue was politicised, involving state agencies and hurting sentiments related to Sikh Gurus. He termed the matter serious, warning that misuse of state agencies in religious or legislative issues would not be tolerated.

Gupta announced a CBI investigation to examine the events in Punjab, ensuring accountability under law. He reiterated that repeated acts by any individual, party, or government that undermine legislative dignity or religious respect would be met with firm action. The Assembly-authorised FSL report, he said, has established the factual truth and highlighted a possible conspiracy surrounding the controversy.

Kashi Transformed Under PM Modi's Leadership, Projects Approved

VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said Kashi has undergone remarkable transformation over the past 11 years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Speaking after offering prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple, CM Yogi highlighted that development projects worth over Rs 55,000 crore have been approved to preserve the city's spiritual identity while modernising it into a global heritage destination.

CM Yogi said before 2014, Kashi did not receive the respect or development it deserved. Under PM Modi's guidance, projects worth Rs 36,000 crore have already been inaugurated, and the rest are progressing rapidly. Devotee footfall has risen from 5,000–25,000 daily to 1.25–1.50 lakh daily, and Kashi now contributes Rs 1.3 lakh crore to the national GDP. He emphasised that the city's spiritual and cultural heritage has been preserved even as modern infrastructure develops.

Earlier, CM Yogi attended the Eastern Zone Inter-University Women's Basketball Competition, praising PM Modi's efforts to promote sports culture in India. He said that prior to 2014, lack of infrastructure and government focus forced talented athletes to migrate or abandon sports. Since 2014, investment in sports facilities and competitions has grown significantly, creating new opportunities for young players nationwide.

Stefan Priesner Appointed UN Resident Coordinator India

NEW DELHI

Stefan Priesner has officially assumed the role of United Nations Resident Coordinator in India, the UN announced on Saturday. Priesner presented his credentials to Sibi George, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, on Friday, marking the beginning of his tenure. As Resident Coordinator, he will lead the UN Country Team in India, supporting national development priorities and guiding efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a coordinated and integrated UN response.

Priesner expressed his commitment to working closely with the Government of India and other partners. "I am honoured to take up this responsibility in India, a country whose diversity, dynamism, and history make it a key partner of the United Nations. We are ready to support inclusive and sustainable development that leaves no one behind," he said.

Bringing nearly three decades of experience in international development, Priesner has held multiple senior roles across UNDP and UN missions. He served as Resident Coordinator in Iran (2021–2025), Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore (2017–2021), and Uzbekistan (2013–2017). Earlier, he worked as Country Director in Bangladesh, Deputy Resident Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and began his UN career in Bhutan in 1997.

An Austrian national, Priesner holds a master's degree in international relations from Johns Hopkins University and a master's in law from the University of Vienna. His extensive experience in policy advisory, multi-sectoral programme management, and international development positions him to strengthen India-UN cooperation in addressing development challenges, promoting sustainability, and supporting inclusive growth across the country.

Tharoor Says Venezuela Regime Still Intact After US Action

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Sunday criticised the United States' recent actions in Venezuela, saying that there has been no real change in the country's regime despite the removal of its leader. He said Washington's move did not bring about genuine regime change but was merely a "decapitation," with the government, security forces and National Assembly continuing under a new interim president.

Addressing reporters, Tharoor noted that although Venezuela's head of government has been replaced, the underlying political system remains largely unchanged, and the officials in charge are essentially the same. He argued that the US intervention was not about promoting democracy, but was driven by strategic interests, especially in Venezuela's vast oil resources — a view underscored by recent US actions to secure Venezuelan oil deals worth billions.

Tharoor also highlighted the unusual nature of the situation, saying it was rare in modern history for a government's leader to be removed while the regime structure stayed intact. He suggested that, over time, free and fair elections might happen in Venezuela, but only without excessive foreign influence.

The broader international context has seen heightened US involvement in Venezuela's political and economic spheres following the capture of former President Nicolás Maduro, with Washington negotiating significant oil arrangements with interim authorities. This development has drawn varied global responses and raised questions about the future of sovereignty and democratic processes in the South American nation.

WATER CRISIS

Rahul Gandhi Criticises BJP Over Indore Water Crisis

BHOPAL

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday strongly criticised the BJP, claiming its 'smart city' initiative has failed as contaminated water in Indore caused diarrhoea and multiple deaths. Speaking in Bhagirathpura, Gandhi said, "People died and families fell ill after drinking contaminated water. Smart cities were promised, but there is no clean water. The government is failing its people."

While the state health department confirmed six deaths, independent assessments and a medical college panel suggested the toll could be at least 15. Gandhi noted similar issues in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, calling it a serious public health and environmental concern. He urged the government to ensure clean water, reduce pollution, hold responsible officials accountable, and provide compensation for treatment and deaths.

Gandhi alleged temporary measures were taken only due to media attention, saying symbolic water tanks would not solve the problem permanently. Water Resources Minister Tulsiram Silawat questioned Gandhi's timing, claiming his visit was politically motivated, but Gandhi insisted he came to support affected families and raise public concerns.

During his visit, Gandhi met families of Geeta Bai and Jeevanlal, distributing Rs 1 lakh each, while state Congress leader Umang Singhar handed Rs 50,000 to other families. The state government said it had already provided Rs 2 lakh compensation to 18 families who lost members.

Gandhi's visit highlighted persistent water contamination and raised questions about the BJP's governance, pressing the administration to take systematic measures for clean drinking water and prevent future health crises in Indore.

QUICK READ

S. Korea reports new African swine fever outbreak

SEOUL

South Korea confirmed its first African swine fever (ASF) case in two months at a farm in Gangneung, Gangwon Province. Of 32 pigs that died, 29 tested positive for the virus, which is deadly to pigs but harmless to humans. Authorities culled 20,000 pigs and imposed a 48-hour standstill on pig farms in six nearby cities to contain the outbreak. Prime Minister Kim Min-seok ordered strict containment and a full investigation into the cause. This is the country's seventh ASF case in 2025, following outbreaks in Dangjin and northern Gyeonggi Province earlier last year.

Deadly road crashes kill 23 across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD

Two separate road accidents in Pakistan on Saturday claimed at least 23 lives and injured dozens, raising concerns over road safety. In Balochistan, nine people died and 36 were hurt when a passenger coach overturned on the Makran Coastal Highway near Gwadar, reportedly due to overspeeding. Rescue teams rushed the injured to Ormara Tehsil Hospital. In Punjab's Sargodha district, 14 people, including women and children, died when a mini-truck carrying 23 passengers veered into a dry canal amid dense fog.

Rights group alarms over Balochistan enforced disappearance

QUETTA

A human rights group has raised concerns over the enforced disappearance of 18-year-old Mehran Baloch, a nursing student from Kech district, allegedly taken by Pakistani intelligence personnel on January 15. The youth was reportedly abducted while training at Kech Hospital, and his family remains unaware of his whereabouts. Rights bodies say such incidents reflect a wider pattern of targeting civilians and students in Balochistan. The Human Rights Council of Balochistan highlighted past abuses, including the acquittal of two women wrongly imprisoned, and called for independent investigations, accountability, and protection of forcibly disappeared Baloch citizens, particularly women and children.

Seven killed, three injured in Cape Town shooting

Investigators link the attack to extortion, a rising issue in South Africa where gangs threaten or attack non-paying locals

CAPE TOWN

Gunmen killed at least seven people and wounded three others in a late night attack on the outskirts of Cape Town, police said on Saturday, in a case believed to be linked to extortion.

The shooting happened shortly after midnight in Marikana, a township in the Cape Flats area, when armed men stormed a small gathering and opened fire.

Police said one woman and six men, aged between 30 and 50, died at the scene. Three victims were taken to hospital with serious injuries.

"The suspects fled the scene and no arrests have been made," police said in a statement. Officers have launched a manhunt and are checking CCTV footage, phone records and witness accounts to trace those responsible.

Investigators believe the attack is connected to extortion, a growing problem in many South African communities where criminal gangs demand protection money from local businesses and residents. When people refuse to pay, they are often threatened or attacked.

South Africa is struggling with high levels of violent crime driven by organised gangs and corruption. Police data shows that around 63 people were killed every day between July and September last year, showing how serious the crisis has become.

The Cape Flats, where the shooting took place, is known for gang violence and turf wars. More than 2,000 murders were recorded in the area in the first nine months of 2025, according to police figures.

Saturday's attack follows earlier mass shootings across South Africa, including deadly incidents at a hostel and a bar in December.

Police urged witnesses to share information to help catch gunmen and prevent violence.

US names senior leaders to 'Board of Peace' for Gaza

Israel and Hamas approved a plan to restore calm and basic services, overseen by international partners, with a UN-backed International Stabilization Force led by US Major General Jeffers.

WASHINGTON

The White House on Friday named senior leaders to a new "Board of Peace" to guide the temporary governance of Gaza under President Donald Trump's October plan, as a fragile ceasefire continues in the war torn territory. Trump will chair the board, which will oversee a Palestinian technocratic body during a transition period.

Members announced include US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Trump's son in law Jared Kushner. The White House said more members will be named soon, but no Palestinians were listed in the first group.

The plan, accepted by Israel and Hamas, aims to support calm and rebuild basic services while international partners supervise the process. A United Nations resolution has cleared the way for an International Stabilization Force, led by US Army Major General Jasper Jeffers.

Nickolay Mladenov, a former UN Middle East envoy, was named high representative for Gaza. An 11 member Gaza Executive Board will support his office, including Turkey's foreign minister Hakan Fidan, UN coordinator Sigrid Kaag and UAE minister Reem Al Hashimy, among others.

Rights groups raised concerns, saying an international board running Gaza risks looking like outside control and questioned the lack of Palestinian voices. The White House did not detail each member's duties.

Since October, Gaza has seen a fragile truce, with both sides accusing each other of violations. Hundreds of Palestinians and several Israeli soldiers have been killed during the ceasefire. The wider war has caused massive damage and hunger. Israel says it is acting in self defense after the 2023 Hamas attack for peace.

A northern Caspian city appeared calm with partly open shops, but Iran's worst unrest since 1979 keeps people indoors

Iran protests death toll crosses three thousand

DUBAI

More than three thousand people have died in Iran's nationwide protests, rights activists said on Saturday, as a harsh crackdown appears to have slowed demonstrations across the country. The U.S. based Human Rights Activists News Agency said it had verified 3,090 deaths, including 2,885 protesters, after weeks of unrest over rising prices and economic hardship.

Residents in Tehran said the capital has been quiet for four days, with drones seen in the sky and police on the streets.

People in other cities also reported calmer scenes, even as state media spoke of more arrests. The protests began on December 28 and quickly spread, with crowds calling for major political change and an end to clerical rule.

A resident from a northern city near the Caspian Sea said streets there also looked calm, with shops partly open and security forces present. Rights groups said this is the worst unrest Iran has seen since the 1979 revolution, warning that fear and pressure are keeping people indoors.

Internet access showed a small improvement after an eight day blackout. Monitoring group NetBlocks said connectivity rose slightly but remained far below normal levels, making it hard for families to contact loved ones. Some Iranians abroad said they were able to send brief messages home early on Saturday. U.S. President Donald Trump said Iran's leaders had stopped mass executions after his warning of strong action, though Tehran has not confirmed any such plans. Indian students and pilgrims returning from Iran said they were mostly confined indoors and could not speak with their families during the shutdown.

India's External Affairs Ministry said commercial flights were running and steps were being taken to ensure the safety of Indian nationals. Rights groups warned that the true death toll could be higher, urging the world to press for calm, dialogue and protection of civilians as Iran faces its darkest days in decades.

Fiorentina owner Rocco Commisso passes away

FLORENCE

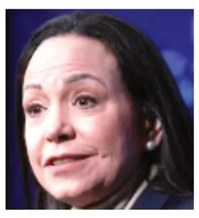
Rocco Commisso, the outspoken owner of Italian soccer club Fiorentina and chairman of U.S.-based Mediacom Communications, has died at the age of 76. Both Fiorentina and Mediacom announced his passing early Saturday but did not reveal the cause of death.

Fiorentina paid tribute, saying, "After a prolonged period of medical treatment, our beloved president has left us, and today we all mourn his passing. His love for Fiorentina was the greatest gift he gave himself." Born in Calabria, Italy, Commisso moved to the United States at age 12. He built Mediacom into one of America's largest cable television companies before purchasing Fiorentina in 2019. Known for speaking out against Italy's bureaucracy and delays in stadium development, he became a prominent voice in Italian football. Commisso also owned the New York Cosmos and was a former soccer player at Columbia University, where he remained a generous supporter.

Machado sees Venezuela moving to free and fair elections

WASHINGTON

Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado said she is confident that her country will eventually move toward free and fair elections, even though the road ahead will be difficult and complex. Speaking after meeting US President Donald Trump at the White House, Machado said the current political system in Venezuela will not last forever and an orderly transition will come with time.



Machado said she believes the remnants of what she called a "criminal regime" will slowly fall apart, opening the way for democratic change. She admitted the process will not be easy and may take longer than many people hope, but said patience and courage are needed to rebuild the nation.

Her visit came just days after former leader Nicolas Maduro was removed from power, while interim President Delcy Rodriguez now leads the country. Trump has focused on securing access to Venezuela's vast oil reserves, choosing stability over immediate political change. Machado praised Trump and avoided criticising his approach, saying she remains hopeful the opposition will play a role in shaping the future. The opposition leader said she wants to return to Venezuela as soon as possible, though she did not confirm any firm agreements with the US government. She said the struggle is not personal, but about ending years of fear, repression and hardship for ordinary citizens.

Chinese drone flies over Taiwan island

TAIPEI

Taiwan on Saturday said a Chinese reconnaissance drone made a provocative flight over the Taiwan controlled Pratas Islands in the South China Sea, raising fresh concerns about regional security. The defence ministry said the drone entered Taiwanese airspace near dawn and stayed for eight minutes before leaving after warnings were broadcast.

Officials said the aircraft flew at a height beyond the reach of air defence weapons, calling it an irresponsible and risky move by China. Taiwan said such actions harm peace and stability and break international rules.

Taiwan reports Chinese military activity almost every day, including warships, fighter jets and drones operating close to the island. While drones are often seen nearby, they rarely cross into Taiwan's airspace, making this incident unusual and worrying for residents and security forces.

The Pratas Islands lie far from mainland Taiwan and are lightly defended, but they sit in a strategic part of the South China Sea. Experts say the islands could be vulnerable because of their distance and the growing tension between Beijing and Taipei.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, a claim rejected by Taiwan's elected government. The defence ministry said its forces remain on high alert and will act calmly to protect the nation.

In 2022, Taiwan shot down a drone after repeated warnings, showing it will act when its airspace is crossed. The government urged China to choose dialogue and respect rules so ordinary people can live and work in peace.

Canada leader rejects link to Bishnoi gang

VANCOUVER

British Columbia Premier David Eby has rejected a media report that linked the Indian government to the violent activities of the Bishnoi gang in Canada, saying the claim was based on public news stories and not on intelligence findings. Speaking from India during his trade mission, Eby said the report had caused serious concern and confusion. He explained that the paragraph quoted in the news report came from a briefing note that only summarised old media articles from October 2024. "This was not an RCMP intelligence report," he said, adding that the claims had already been discussed earlier and were not new findings by police.

Eby said his team was so worried after the report appeared that they almost cancelled meetings in India until they saw the full document. He said they had taken great care before the visit, with security briefings from Canada's defence ministry, intelligence agencies and the federal government to understand the state of ties with India.

The original report had suggested the Bishnoi gang was acting on behalf of the Indian government, but later clarified that this was only an allegation and not a proven link.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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9	2	5	3	7	1	4	6	8
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1	8	3	9	4	2	6	7	5
5	9	2	7	6	8	3	4	1
7	6	4	5	1	3	9	8	4

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

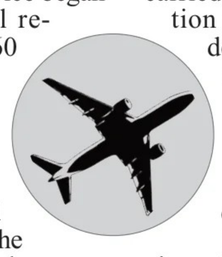
Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

FLIGHT RISK WARNING

US warns airlines over military risks while flying over Mexico

WASHINGTON

The United States has warned airlines to be careful when flying over Mexico, Central America and parts of South America, saying there is a risk from military activity and GPS interference. The Federal Aviation Administration said it has issued safety notices for Mexico, Central American countries, Ecuador and Colombia, as well as nearby airspace over the eastern Pacific Ocean. The advice began on Friday and will remain in force for 60 days.



The FAA said the warnings are meant to protect crews and passengers during a period of rising tension in the region. Relations have been strained since the Trump administration built up forces in the southern Caribbean and carried out a military operation in Venezuela. President Donald Trump has also spoken about possible action against drug cartels and other targets, which has raised concern among airlines.

Mexico said the notice is only a precaution and does not limit its airspace. The Mexican government added that flights can continue as normal and that the advisory applies only to US operators.

After the Venezuela operation, the FAA limited flights across the Caribbean, leading to hundreds of cancellations. The agency said it worked closely with the US military to manage risks and keep travellers safe.

Last month, a JetBlue flight heading to New York took evasive action near Venezuela after coming close to a US Air Force tanker plane that was flying without its transponder switched on. The incident showed how quickly danger can arise in busy skies.

Airlines are reviewing routes, training crews and systems. The FAA urged carriers to stay alert and put safety first while the region stays tense.

QUICK READ

US tariffs rock Coimbatore Tirupur industries hard

Chennai
Coimbatore and Tirupur, once strong industrial centres, are facing a severe crisis after the United States raised tariffs on Indian goods to 50 percent. Textile and engineering factories have cut shifts or closed, causing massive job losses. Industry estimates say over two lakh workers have already lost jobs, while total affected people may exceed three lakh. Exports to the US have fallen sharply, dropping by nearly one billion dollars. Higher duties have made Indian products costly compared to rivals. Exporters now urge India to focus on European and UK markets to survive during ongoing global trade uncertainty.

Puravankara grows strong with major property acquisitions

Bengaluru
Puravankara Limited reported strong growth in the third quarter of FY26, supported by new property acquisitions and steady sales. The company recorded pre-sales of Rs 1,414 crore, showing a 17 percent yearly rise. Customer collections increased 22 percent to Rs 1,140 crore. During the first nine months, Puravankara added 12.76 million square feet of land with an estimated value of Rs 13,900 crore. Major projects were secured in Bengaluru and Mumbai. The management said focus remains on careful execution, expansion, and building long-term customer trust across key markets, while demand stayed strong in housing and redevelopment segments.

Ireda subsidiary approves first Zambia solar loan

New Delhi
Ireda Global Green Energy Finance IFSC Ltd (IGGEFIL), a subsidiary of the state-owned Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency, has approved its first international green energy loan. The company will provide USD 22.5 million to Swarna Solar for a 100 MW solar project in Zambia. The board sanctioned the funding during a meeting held in New Delhi on Friday. IGGEFIL aims to support clean energy projects abroad, marking a major step in India's renewable energy outreach. The initiative reflects growing collaboration between Indian financial institutions and global green energy development efforts.

AU Bank, ICSI launch exclusive services for secretaries

New Delhi
AU Small Finance Bank has partnered with the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) to offer special banking solutions for company secretaries nationwide. The agreement provides ICSI members with tailored current and savings accounts, along with a profession-focused credit card designed for governance, practice management, and personal finance needs. The partnership also aims to create employment opportunities for company secretaries within the bank. This MoU reflects a focused effort to support the financial and career growth of professionals in the field, combining specialized banking services with potential job openings for members.

Reforms and trade pacts lift India economy: Goyal

Goyal said free trade deals with developed nations boost Indian businesses, expand markets, and create a favorable climate

NEW DELHI

India is moving ahead as a strong and trusted economy, helped by easy business rules and new trade deals, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday. He said the government's big reforms in 2025 have given fresh hope to startups, small businesses, exporters and investors across the country.

In a post on social media, Goyal said the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought clear and bold changes. These steps have made it simpler to start and run a business, cut delays, and open doors to global markets. He said this new spirit is shaping India's future and building confidence at home and abroad.

Goyal said free trade agreements with developed nations are creating new chances for Indian companies. These deals help Indian goods and services reach more customers and give investors a stable and friendly climate to grow. He spoke at the "Startup Pe Charcha" event at Bharat Mandapam, where young founders shared ideas and success stories.

The minister urged startups to work with partners from other countries, especially in services, digital payments, clean energy, mobility and new technologies. He said such teamwork will help Indian firms scale up faster and compete on the world stage.

Goyal also spoke about a big change among the youth. He said young Indians now show strong self belief and are ready to take risks. More students are choosing to build their own companies and try new ideas, instead of only looking for safe jobs.

He said this rising confidence, along with smart policies, is helping India become self reliant, competitive and globally trusted nation today.

GTRI calls for major tariff overhaul

NEW DELHI

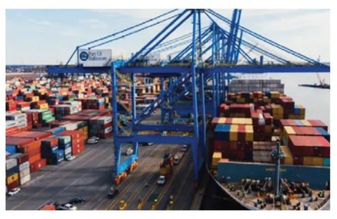
India needs a big change in its import tariff system and customs processes to cut trade costs and boost manufacturing and exports, the Global Trade Research Initiative said on Saturday. The think tank said complex duties are hurting businesses and slowing growth at a time when global firms are looking for new supply partners.

GTRI said tariffs are no longer a major source of revenue. Customs duties now make up only about six per cent of total tax collections and are less than four per cent of the value of imports. Yet companies face a maze of rates, cesses and surcharges that raise costs and delay shipments.

The report urged the government to move towards zero duty on most raw materials and key parts, and a low standard duty of around five per cent on finished industrial goods over the next three years. It also asked for the removal of inverted duties, where inputs are taxed more than final products, which hurts local factories.

Extreme tariffs, such as very high duties on alcohol, should be cut, as they encourage evasion and bring little benefit, GTRI said. It called for a simpler, transparent tariff book that shows the full import duty in one place.

GTRI said India's merchandise trade has crossed 1.16 trillion dollars, with nearly a third of GDP passing through customs. Small delays now raise prices across the economy and weaken export strength.



Revamped forex rules ease business for traders

NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India has announced new foreign exchange rules to make life easier for exporters and importers. The Foreign Exchange Management Regulations, 2026 will start from October 1 and aim to cut paperwork, speed up approvals and support small traders and service firms across the country.

In a statement, the RBI said the new rules are simple and principle based. They focus on ease of doing business, especially for small exporters, importers and startups. Banks that handle foreign exchange will get more freedom to solve routine trade matters quickly and offer faster service to customers.

The new rules will replace the old 2015 export rules. Exporters will continue to declare shipment values through the Export Declaration Form at electronic ports, where customs work is done online. Service exporters must file their details within 30 days of issuing an invoice, with options for monthly filing and extra time if approved by banks.

Software exports are now clearly treated as services. Authorised banks and Software Technology Parks of India will help manage these filings. The RBI kept the 15 month time limit for bringing export money back to India, and extended it to 18 months for deals settled in Indian rupees.

For small deals up to ten lakh rupees, traders can close pending entries through self declaration, including quarterly bulk filings. This will greatly reduce stress for MSMEs and service exporters.

The RBI also told banks to keep charges fair and not penalise traders for small delays, making the system more friendly and supportive for a stronger trade future.

US Envoy meets RBI Chief to boost cooperation

MUMBAI

US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor on Saturday said he met Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra in Mumbai and discussed ways to increase cooperation between the two countries. The meeting focused on future partnerships, including the use of modern American technology in key sectors.

During his visit, Gor also toured the US Consulate in Mumbai, marking his first official trip to India's financial capital. He said he was pleased to see the team working closely to strengthen the growing partnership between India and the United States.

In a social media post, the envoy said India will be invited next month to join Pax Silica, a US-led technology initiative. The project focuses on semiconductors, artificial intelligence and secure supply chains that are important for global growth and safety.

Gor said India and the US continue to stay engaged on trade matters, and the next round of talks is expected soon. While he did not share details, he confirmed that follow-up meetings between officials from both nations are planned.

Gor stated India and the US remain engaged on trade, with follow-up meetings planned and the next round of talks expected soon, though no details were shared

Speaking after taking office, Gor said his key goal is to deepen ties between the world's oldest and largest democracies. He added that cooperation in new and emerging technologies will play a major role.

Pax Silica was launched last month to build a safe and innovation-driven silicon supply chain. It covers critical minerals, energy needs, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence and logistics. Countries like Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom and Israel have already joined.

He said cooperation will help both nations stay competitive, secure, innovative, and prepared for future challenges.

Scindia said India's 120 crore mobile users will get 4G in all villages by June, advancing digital access nationwide

India leads world in low data costs: Jyotiraditya Scindia

NEW DELHI

India now enjoys the world's lowest data prices and the highest data usage, Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Saturday, highlighting the country's fast growing digital network. He said strong digital infrastructure under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made internet access affordable for millions of people.

Scindia said India has more than 120 crore mobile users and the 4G network will reach every village by June this year. In a post on social media, he said India's digital revolution is built for the people, bringing fast and cheap internet to cities and villages alike.

The minister said BSNL has set up over 97,000 4G sites, with more than 93,000 already live. The state run company plans to upgrade all these towers to 5G in the coming months. At the same time, private telecom firms are also expanding networks across the country.

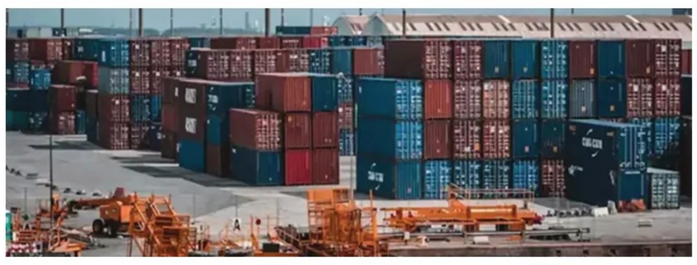
5G services have now been launched in all states and union territories and are available in almost every district. Over five lakh 5G towers have been installed, helping users enjoy faster speeds for work, learning and entertainment.

To improve coverage and reduce call drops, the government has launched projects such as BharatNet to bring broadband to villages, mobile services in remote and difficult areas, and the 4G Saturation scheme to cover all uncovered villages.

Scindia said India is also preparing for the future with a strong 6G plan. He said spectrum policy will be central to this journey and that all parts of the digital ecosystem must work together for innovation to grow.

CRISIL warns global trade headwinds threaten India's exports

KOLKATA



India's merchandise exports are likely to face tough times ahead as global trade challenges grow, ratings agency CRISIL said in a new report. The firm warned that delays in the India US trade deal and the risk of fresh American sanctions on Russian crude oil could hurt export growth in the coming months.

CRISIL said tea and basmati rice may come under pressure after the United States imposed a 25 per cent tariff on countries trading with Iran. This move could reduce demand for these products and affect farmers and exporters who depend on overseas markets.

The report said exports are growing slower than imports, which has widened the merchandise trade deficit. In December 2025, the trade gap rose to 25 billion dollars, compared to 20 billion dollars a year earlier. Exports to the United States also slowed to 1.8 per cent growth, though the US remains India's top export market, mainly due to strong smartphone shipments.

Despite these worries, CRISIL said India's overall external position remains safe. The current account deficit is expected to stay manageable because of strong earnings from services, steady remittances from Indians working abroad, and softer crude oil prices.

The agency expects the current account deficit to be around one per cent of GDP this financial year. It may rise slightly to 1.6 per cent in 2026 27, but will still remain within a safe range.

CRISIL said strong performance in IT services, tourism and business services is helping balance weaker goods exports. This support is keeping the economy stable even as global trade risks rise.

The report added that while global uncertainty remains high, India's services strength and steady money inflows will help protect the economy and keep growth on track.

FLAT WEEK OPTIMISM

Indian markets stay flat amid cautious optimism

MUMBAI

Indian stock markets ended the week almost flat as investors stayed hopeful about strong third quarter earnings and fresh trade talks between India and the United States. At the same time, rising global tensions made many traders careful while taking new positions.

The Nifty gained slightly to close the week at 25,694, while the Sensex finished at 83,570 after rising on the final trading day. During the week, gains in PSU banks and metal stocks helped support the market, but selling in pharma, consumer goods and auto shares kept overall movement limited.

Market experts said investors are closely watching company results, especially from IT and banking firms. Early earnings have been encouraging, showing steady growth and better asset quality. One large IT company even raised its revenue outlook, which lifted confidence across the technology sector.

Banks also reported healthy numbers, showing that loan growth remains strong and bad loans are under control. This has given investors hope that the Indian economy is on a stable recovery path.

Broader markets performed better than the main indices. The Nifty Midcap 100 and Nifty Smallcap 100 both ended the week with gains, showing strong interest in smaller companies.

However, global worries kept investors cautious. Ongoing geopolitical tensions and high bond yields made foreign investors careful about putting money into emerging markets like India.

Investors are also watching key global events such as the US Supreme Court decision on tariffs and important data on US inflation and growth. These will guide future market direction.

Overall, optimism around earnings and trade talks kept markets steady, even as global risks remained in focus.

India tech hiring set for strong 2026

NEW DELHI

India's technology job market is expected to see healthy growth in 2026, with hiring rising by 12 to 15 percent and creating nearly 1.25 lakh new roles across permanent, temporary, and contract positions. A recent industry report says companies are moving out of a cautious phase and preparing for expansion as digital needs grow stronger.

The study notes that the talent shortage touched 44 percent in 2025, forcing companies to offer higher salaries. Median pay packages rose about 18 percent compared to the previous year, leading to intense competition for skilled professionals.

Demand for artificial intelligence, data, and cybersecurity jobs jumped sharply, as these roles became essential rather than optional. Many large firms have already put generative AI projects into daily operations. Hiring also increased for machine learning engineers, data engineers, and full-stack developers with AI skills.

Campus recruitment improved, while start-ups in fintech, health-tech, SaaS, and deep-tech boosted hiring. Banks, healthcare firms, manufacturing, logistics, and global capability centres also added staff as non-tech industries adopted AI and data systems more deeply.

Experts believe this steady recovery signals confidence, with employers planning long term investments, smoother deployments, and broader digital transformation across Indian workplaces next year, nationwide growth.

MIRRA ANDREEVA Clinches Adelaide International Crown

Teenage sensation Mirra Andreeva stormed to the Adelaide International title, underlining her growing stature ahead of Melbourne

ADELAIDE

Teenage tennis star Mirra Andreeva continued her remarkable rise on the WTA Tour by capturing the Adelaide International title with a commanding straight-sets victory over fellow teenager Victoria Mboko. The 18-year-old Russian defeated the Canadian 6–3, 6–1 in the final, delivering a dominant performance that lasted just 64 minutes and reinforced her status as one of the sport's brightest young talents heading into the Australian Open.

The championship match did not begin smoothly for Andreeva, who trailed 3–0 early in the opening set as Mboko carried forward the confidence from her impressive run to the final. Mboko had stunned defending champion Madison Keys in the quarterfinals and followed it up with a semifinal victory over Kimberly Birrell, showcasing maturity well beyond her years. However, once Andreeva settled into the contest, the momentum shifted decisively. She reeled off nine consecutive games and captured 12 of the final 13, leaving little room for her opponent to recover.

The title marked Andreeva's fourth career WTA Tour singles crown and her first triumph at the WTA 500 level, coming at the Adelaide International. Her dominance throughout the week was reflected in the statistics, as she registered 21 service breaks across four matches and won more than 71 percent of her first-serve points. In the final alone, Andreeva broke Mboko five times, struck 15 winners, and committed just 11 unforced errors, highlighting her balance and composure from both wings.

Already boasting an impressive résumé that includes a WTA 250 title, two WTA 1000 singles crowns, and multiple doubles honors including an Olympic silver medal Andreeva's latest success will see her rise to a career-high world No. 7 in the PIF WTA Rankings.

JAKUB MENSIK Triumphs at Auckland Classic

AUCKLAND

Rising Czech talent Jakub Mensik capped a superb week on hard courts by lifting the Auckland Classic trophy after defeating Sebastian Baez 6–3, 7–6(7) in a tightly contested final. The 20-year-old produced a composed and confident display to secure the ATP 250 crown, underlining his growing stature on the men's tour ahead of the season's first Grand Slam.

The final lasted one hour and 22 minutes, but the contest could easily have extended further had Baez converted any of the three set points he held in a dramatic second-set tiebreak. Mensik showed remarkable poise under pressure, saving three consecutive set points from 3–6 down in the breaker before turning the tables to seal the championship.

Mensik laid the foundation for victory with an early break in the sixth game of the opening set, a lead he never looked like surrendering. His serve proved a major weapon throughout the match, allowing him to dictate play and keep Baez on the defensive for long stretches. That serving performance also carried historical significance, as Mensik became the youngest Auckland champion since Juan Martin del Potro claimed the title in 2009. Overall, he is now the fifth-youngest winner in the tournament's history.

The second set delivered high drama. Baez fought hard, saving multiple break points at 5–5 despite struggling with double faults, before eventually forcing a tiebreak. The Argentine even managed to break Mensik when the Czech served for the match, raising hopes of a decider. However, Mensik's composure shone brightest when it mattered most. After erasing Baez's set points, he capitalised on key errors to close out the match with authority.

The Auckland triumph marks Mensik's second ATP Tour title, following his breakthrough success at the Miami Open, where he famously defeated Novak Djokovic in the final. With this latest victory, he is set to rise to a career-high No. 17 in the ATP Rankings.

Young Czech star Jakub Mensik sealed the Auckland Classic title, showcasing resilience and maturity ahead of Melbourne

Bangladesh Cricketers Call Off Boycott After Consensus, BPL T20 Set to Resume

DHAKA

Bangladesh's professional cricketers called off their boycott "in the greater interest of the game" after reaching a consensus with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the players' welfare association, bringing relief to fans and stakeholders alike. The decision has cleared the path for the resumption of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 matches, which were scheduled to restart on January 16, 2026.

The boycott, announced earlier by a group of disgruntled players, had raised serious concerns over the continuity of the country's flagship domestic T20 tournament. Players had voiced dissatisfaction over several issues, including contractual obligations, payment structures, and broader welfare-related matters. With matches at risk of being disrupted, the situation prompted urgent talks between the BCB and representatives of the cricketers.

Following a series of discussions, both sides reportedly agreed on a framework aimed at addressing the players' concerns while ensuring the smooth conduct of the tournament.

While detailed terms of the agreement were not immediately disclosed, officials indicated that assurances were given regarding improved communication, timely resolution of grievances, and a more structured approach to player welfare going forward.

In a joint welfare association emphasized that the decision to withdraw the boycott was taken keeping the long-term health of Bangladeshi cricket in mind. "This decision was made in the greater interest of the game," a representative said, adding that players were satisfied that their voices had been heard and acknowledged by the board.

The BCB, meanwhile, welcomed the resolution and expressed confidence that the remaining BPL fixtures would proceed without further disruption. Board officials reiterated their commitment to maintaining a professional environment for players and ensuring that domestic competitions remain competitive and commercially viable.

Ricky Ponting questions Ashes selections, highlighting Beau Webster's surprising omission

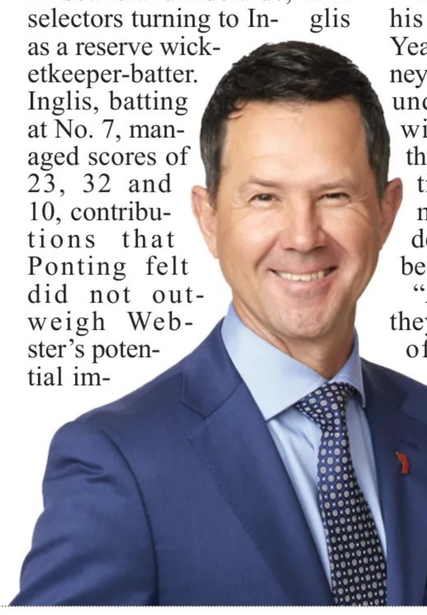
Ponting Questions Ashes Selection Calls

NEW DELHI

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting has raised fresh doubts over Australia's selection strategy during the Ashes, admitting he remains unable to understand why Josh Inglis was preferred ahead of all-rounder Beau Webster during key stages of the series.

Webster, who made a strong impression early in his Test career, including a match-winning debut performance in last year's Border-Gavaskar Trophy finale, was overlooked for the opening Ashes Test in Perth. Australia instead opted to include Cameron Green at No. 6, leaving Webster out of the playing XI.

The omission continued through the next two Tests in Brisbane and Adelaide, with selectors turning to Inglis as a reserve wicketkeeper-batter. Inglis, batting at No. 7, managed scores of 23, 32 and 10, contributions that Ponting felt did not outweigh Webster's potential impact as a genuine all-round option.



Webster eventually earned his opportunity in the New Year's Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, where he underlined his credentials with an unbeaten 71 and three wickets using his part-time off-spin. The performance only added to the debate around why he had been left out for so long.

"At the start I was surprised they went with Inglis ahead of Beau," Ponting said while speaking to SEN Tassie. He acknowledged that selectors rely heavily on data and metrics but admitted he struggled to see what justified the call. According to Ponting, Webster's form and versatility offered Australia better balance, particularly in home conditions where all-rounders often play a decisive role.

Ponting also suggested that upcoming changes in Australia's batting order could present a fresh opportunity for Webster. With Usman Khawaja absent and Travis Head likely to continue opening, the former captain believes the No. 5 position could be Webster's to claim.

"He may not be the flashiest, but he's a gamer," Ponting said, adding that Webster's understanding of match situations makes him difficult to leave out going forward.

Novak Djokovic Says "Drug-Like" Adrenaline Keeps Retirement Far From His Mind

MELBOURNE

Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic has made it clear that thoughts of retirement are far from his mind, revealing that the sport still gives him a powerful, "drug-like" adrenaline rush. Speaking on Saturday, January 17, 2026, the 38-year-old said his enduring love for competition and the emotional highs of match play continue to drive him at the highest level of the game.

Djokovic, widely regarded as one of the greatest players in tennis history, explained that the intensity he feels when stepping onto the court remains as strong as ever. Despite having already achieved almost everything the sport has to offer, including multiple Grand Slam titles and long stints as world No. 1, the Serbian star said the feeling of competing in front of packed stadiums still fuels his motivation.

"When I step on the court and feel that adrenaline, it's almost like a drug," Djokovic said. "That feeling hasn't gone away, and as long as it's there, I don't see myself stopping anytime soon." His comments come amid growing speculation about how much longer veteran players can continue to compete at the top in an increasingly physical sport dominated by younger challengers.

Djokovic's longevity has been a defining feature of his career. While many of his longtime rivals have either retired or scaled back their schedules, he has continued to contend for major titles, defying age through strict discipline, fitness, and recovery routines. His ability to adapt his game and maintain mental sharpness has allowed him to remain competitive against players more than a decade younger.

The Serbian also acknowledged that managing his body has become more demanding with age, but insisted that careful planning and experience help him navigate the long tennis calendar.

AC Milan Rally Past Como as Adrien Rabiot Brace Keeps Serie A Title Push Alive

MILAN

AC Milan staged an impressive comeback to secure a 3–1 away victory over Como, with a double strike from Adrien Rabiot proving decisive in keeping the Rossoneri firmly in the Serie A title race. The result underlined Milan's resilience and growing momentum as the season approaches a crucial phase.

The hosts made a confident start and stunned the visitors by taking an early lead, capitalising on a defensive lapse to put pressure on Milan. For a time, Como looked well organised and disciplined, forcing the away side to work hard to find rhythm and penetration in the final third. However, Milan's experience and quality gradually began to show as they increased the tempo and asserted greater control over possession.

The turning point arrived when Rabiot, operating with authority in midfield, began to influence the game more decisively. The French international drew Milan level with a composed finish, shifting the momentum firmly in favour of the visitors. His equaliser settled Milan's nerves and opened the contest, forcing Como to retreat deeper into their own half.

After the break, Milan emerged with renewed intensity. Rabiot struck again, timing his run perfectly before finishing clinically to give the visitors the lead. His second goal highlighted not only his attacking instincts but also Milan's improved movement and cohesion as the match wore on. With Como struggling to respond, Milan pressed their advantage and eventually added a third goal to seal the contest and remove any lingering doubt about the outcome.

The victory is a significant one for AC Milan, who remain locked in a tight battle at the top end of the Serie A table. Dropping points in matches like this could have proved costly, but the comeback win demonstrated the squad's mental strength and depth.

RADUCANU SCHEDULING CONCERNS

Emma Raducanu Raises Concerns Over Australian Open Scheduling

SYDNEY

British tennis star Emma Raducanu has questioned the scheduling at the Australian Open, saying it left her with little time to properly prepare for the season's first Grand Slam after arriving in Melbourne just days before her opening match.

Raducanu reached Melbourne after completing her quarter-final run at the Hobart International and was scheduled to play her first-round match on Sunday. The tight turnaround meant the former US Open champion had limited opportunity to settle into conditions, recover physically, and practice ahead of her opener against Thailand's Mananchaya Sawangkaew.

Compounding the challenge, Raducanu has been slated for the opening day's second night session at Margaret Court Arena. With the women's match following a men's encounter scheduled to begin at 7 pm local time, there is potential for a significantly late start — a scenario Raducanu believes raises questions about fairness and player welfare.

"It's very difficult. You would love to have more time in the environment, more time practising," Raducanu said, as quoted by Sky Sports. While acknowledging that complaining would not help her cause, she noted that scheduling women's matches after a possible five-set men's contest "doesn't really make as much sense," especially on the opening day of a major.

The 23-year-old admitted the situation is unfamiliar territory for her, as she has rarely played such late matches in her career. Apart from a similar experience during the US Open semifinals, Raducanu said adapting to late-night starts is something she will need to learn quickly.

Her preparation has already been disrupted by physical concerns, particularly a lingering foot injury that limited her preseason training. Those issues were evident during the United Cup, where she was not at her best against Maria Sakkari. In Hobart, she showed flashes of form with a win over Camila Osorio and a walkover against Magdalena Frech, before suffering a setback against Australian wildcard Taylah Preston.

Despite the challenges, Raducanu remains optimistic. She said her foot problem has improved significantly and stressed that her focus is on gradual progress rather than immediate results.

Matt Weston Secures Third Straight Skeleton WC Crown

Britain's Matt Weston strengthened his Olympic gold credentials by winning a third consecutive overall Skeleton World Cup title

ST. MORITZ

Britain's leading skeleton racer Matt Weston has firmly underlined his status as a favourite for Olympic gold after clinching his third successive overall Skeleton World Cup title a remarkable run of consistency and excellence on the international circuit.

Weston sealed the overall crown at the final World Cup event of the season in Altenberg, finishing joint-second in a rare three-way tie. The British athlete shared the podium position with Germany's Christopher Grotheer and Axel Jungk, a result that was sufficient to confirm his overall triumph for the season.

The outcome capped another dominant campaign for Weston, who has been a model of consistency across venues and conditions. By securing three consecutive overall World Cup titles, he has further cemented his reputation as one of the most reliable and composed competitors in the sport, particularly when the pressure is at its highest.

Reflecting on the unusual finish, Weston admitted the result was extraordinary even by skeleton's unpredictable standards. I'm kind of getting used to these three-way ties. It's the second one in my career and I think probably the second one I've ever seen. It's pretty crazy, he said, highlighting just how fine the margins are at the elite level of the sport.

The achievement comes at a crucial time, with attention now turning to the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics next month. Weston's form throughout the World Cup season has placed him firmly among the leading contenders for gold, raising expectations that Britain could be celebrating a major Olympic success in skeleton.

Weston's ability to handle pressure, adapt quickly to different tracks, and deliver consistent runs has been central to his success. Unlike rivals who have produced flashes of brilliance interspersed with inconsistency, the Briton has repeatedly delivered podium-level performances, ensuring he stayed ahead in the overall standings.

Joel Hofer starred in goal as St. Louis snapped Tampa Bay's 11-game winning streak

HOFER SHINES AS BLUES SNAP LIGHTNING'S STREAK

ST. LOUIS

Goaltender Joel Hofer delivered a standout performance, turning aside 34 shots through regulation and overtime before adding three more saves in the shootout to lift the St. Louis Blues to a dramatic 3–2 victory over the visiting Tampa Bay Lightning. The result snapped Tampa Bay's impressive 11-game winning streak and marked a statement win for St. Louis.

Hofer was under sustained pressure for much of the contest as the Lightning pushed the pace and generated consistent scoring chances. Calm and composed between the pipes, the Blues netminder repeatedly denied Tampa Bay's top forwards, keeping his side within reach during long defensive stretches. His work proved decisive not only during open play, but also in the high-pressure environment of the shootout.

After the teams were locked at 2–2 following overtime, St. Louis leaned on its goaltender and skill players to seal the outcome. Jordan Kyrou scored the decisive goal in the shootout, showcasing his finishing touch at the critical moment. Kyrou also contributed an assist during regulation, playing a key role in the Blues' offensive efforts on the night.

St. Louis got on the scoresheet during regulation through Jake Neighbours and Nick Bjugstad, whose goals ensured the contest remained finely balanced. Each tally was the product of sustained pressure and smart positioning, allowing the Blues to capitalise on their opportunities against a formidable opponent.

Tampa Bay, riding high after an 11-game run of victories, showed why they are among the league's most dangerous sides. Their relentless attack tested Hofer throughout the evening, and they forced overtime with strong late-game execution. However, the Lightning were unable to find a way past the Blues goaltender when it mattered most, particularly in the shootout.

The win marked St. Louis' second straight victory and provided a significant confidence boost as they look to build momentum in a competitive stretch of the season. Ending a long winning streak for a team of Tampa Bay's calibre underlined the Blues' resilience and defensive commitment. For the Lightning, the loss brought an end to a dominant run but served as a reminder of the fine margins in the National Hockey League.

Michael Carrick Tunes Out Noise Ahead of Man United Return

LONDON

Former midfielder Michael Carrick has insisted he is blocking out the background noise as he prepares for his second stint as Manchester United's interim manager, with a high-stakes derby clash against Manchester City looming large.

Carrick, who enjoyed a glittering playing career at Old Trafford, returns to the dugout at a challenging moment for the club. During his time as a player, the former England international won five Premier League titles and lifted the UEFA Champions League, playing a key role in one of the most successful eras in Manchester United's history. However, his return as interim manager comes with the club struggling for form and searching for direction, far removed from those golden days.

Handed control for the remainder of the season, Carrick finds himself at the centre of divided opinion among supporters and pundits alike. While some view his appointment as a steadying presence during a turbulent period, others question whether the former midfielder has the experience required to spark a meaningful revival. Carrick, though, has made it clear that external debate is not his concern.

Speaking ahead of the derby, Carrick said he is focused solely on the task at hand: extracting the maximum possible from the current campaign. He acknowledged the scale of the challenge but stressed that his priority is to concentrate on preparation, performance, and results rather than public reaction.

The upcoming clash with Manchester City presents an immediate and formidable test. United's city rivals have set the benchmark in English football in recent seasons, while Carrick's side has struggled for consistency. A positive result in the derby could provide a much-needed lift, offering belief to players and fans during a difficult run.

Carrick's familiarity with the club's culture and expectations could prove vital in stabilising the dressing room. Having previously served on the coaching staff, he understands the pressures that come with the role and the scrutiny attached to every decision.

Durant's 39 power Rockets past Timberwolves

HOUSTON

NBA superstar Kevin Durant produced a sensational all-round display to lead the Houston Rockets to a hard-fought 110–105 victory over the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves. Durant capped his standout performance by calmly sinking four crucial free throws in the final minute, shutting the door on a late Minnesota comeback.

Durant finished the night with 39 points, shooting an ultra-efficient 11-of-18 from the field and a scorching 6-of-8 from beyond the three-point arc. His scoring touch proved decisive as Houston overturned a 12-point deficit, showcasing composure and execution at both ends of the floor during the closing stretch.

The Rockets appeared in control midway through the fourth quarter after building a nine-point advantage, but the Timberwolves refused to fade quietly. Julius Randle ignited a late surge, matching Durant's 39-point output and applying serious pressure down the stretch. Randle scored on consecutive possessions to cut the deficit to just three points at 105–102 with 1:33 remaining, briefly threatening to swing momentum back in Minnesota's favour. Randle's offensive effort was relentless, as he connected on 14 of his 25 attempts from the floor, repeatedly attacking the paint and punishing defensive mismatches. His scoring spree kept the Timberwolves within striking distance and set up a tense final minute.

However, Durant once again demonstrated why he remains one of the league's most reliable closers. After Houston earned trips to the free-throw line, the veteran forward converted all four of his attempts under pressure, extending the Rockets' lead and extinguishing Minnesota's hopes of a late turnaround.

Fiorentina President Rocco Commisso Dies at 76 After Prolonged Illness

ATHENS

Italian Serie A club Fiorentina announced on Saturday the death of its president Rocco Commisso, who passed away at the age of 76 following a prolonged period of medical treatment. The club did not disclose the cause of death, but tributes quickly poured in from across the football world, recognising his influence both on and off the pitch.

Born in the southern Italian region of Calabria, Commisso emigrated to the United States at the age of 12, where he went on to build a highly successful career in the cable television industry. A veteran media executive, he founded cable provider Mediacom in 1995, growing it into one of the largest privately owned cable operators in the United States.

Commisso entered Italian football in 2019 when he acquired Fiorentina, marking the beginning of a new era for the Florence-based club. His takeover was seen as a turning point, bringing financial stability and renewed ambition after a turbulent period in the club's history. Under his ownership, Fiorentina invested heavily in infrastructure, youth development, and squad strengthening, while maintaining a strong connection with its fan base.

In an emotional statement, the club paid tribute to Commisso's deep affection for football and the city he came to represent. Football was his passion, and Fiorentina became so seven years ago, when Rocco took charge of the Viola club and began to love its supporters, its colours, and the city of Florence, the statement said, reflecting the bond he formed with the club and its community.

Jason Carroll's MOD70 Argo delivered a breathtaking Atlantic crossing

SPAIN

American sailor Jason Carroll produced one of the most electrifying performances in modern offshore racing as his MOD70 trimaran Argo tore across the Atlantic to claim Multihull Line Honours and rewrite the record books at the RORC Transatlantic Race.

Rather than merely crossing the ocean, Argo appeared to slice it open, blasting from Lanzarote to the Caribbean in under five days in a ferocious trade-wind sprint that left the rest of the fleet trailing in spray. The American trimaran crossed the finish line off English Harbour, completing the demanding route in a staggering four days, 23 hours, 51 minutes and 15 seconds.

From the opening miles, Argo demonstrated blistering pace, exploiting strong, consistent trade winds and showcasing the raw power of the MOD70 design. With sustained high speeds day and night, Carroll and his crew maintained relentless pressure, pushing the trimaran hard while executing precise sail changes and tactical decisions. The result was a near-flawless passage that obliterated previous benchmarks for the iconic transatlantic challenge.

The RORC Transatlantic Race is renowned for testing seamanship, endurance, and technical excellence over thousands of ocean miles. While the fleet featured a diverse range of monohulls and multihulls, Argo quickly separated itself, transforming the race into a one-boat masterclass at the front of the pack. As competitors battled heavy seas and shifting conditions, Carroll's team capitalised on favourable angles and the MOD70's extraordinary speed potential.

Line Honours victory further cements Argo's reputation as one of the fastest offshore multihulls afloat and underscores Carroll's standing among elite ocean racers. The record-breaking crossing is also a testament to meticulous preparation, cutting-edge design, and disciplined execution under pressure.

As Argo lay at anchor in Antigua, the achievement resonated across the sailing world. The Atlantic, a traditional proving ground for sailors over centuries, had once again been humbled—this time by a trimaran moving at breathtaking pace. For Jason Carroll and his crew, the voyage was not just a win, but a statement: in the modern era of offshore racing, limits are there to be shattered.

HISTORIC VENUS WILDCARD

Venus Williams Thanks Australian Open for Wildcard

MELBOURNE

Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams has expressed her gratitude to Australian Open organisers for awarding her a wildcard entry, a decision that will see the 45-year-old become the oldest woman ever to compete in the singles main draw of the tournament. The landmark appearance adds yet another remarkable chapter to the illustrious career of one of tennis's most influential figures.

Williams, a former world No. 1 and winner of multiple major titles, acknowledged the significance of the opportunity, thanking tournament officials for their faith and support. Her inclusion ensures that fans in Melbourne will once again witness one of the sport's most iconic champions on the grand stage of the Australian Open, where experience, legacy, and inspiration often intersect.

The American returned to competitive tennis last season after a 16-month absence from the tour, a break prompted by ongoing injury struggles and the physical demands of a long career. Her comeback was met with widespread interest, as Williams continued to defy conventional expectations surrounding age and longevity in professional sport. Across four tour-level matches since her return, she registered one victory, focusing on gradually rebuilding match fitness and confidence.

Williams began the 2026 season at the Auckland Classic, where she also competed as a wildcard. However, her campaign ended in the first round with a defeat to Poland's Magda Linette, who is currently ranked 53rd in the world. Despite the early exit, Williams remained upbeat, emphasising the importance of gaining match practice and rhythm after limited time on court in recent years.

Throughout her career, Williams has been celebrated not only for her powerful game and fierce competitiveness, but also for her role in transforming women's tennis. Alongside her sister Serena, she helped usher in a new era of athleticism, visibility, and equality in the sport, leaving a legacy that extends far beyond trophies and rankings.

Her appearance in Melbourne will carry symbolic weight, serving as a testament to perseverance and passion. While expectations around results may be tempered, Williams's presence alone is seen as a victory for the sport, inspiring players and fans alike with her continued commitment to competing at the highest level.

Nenapaadalu Shaakuntale Poster Unveiled

The first look poster of the upcoming Kannada film Nenapaadalu Shaakuntale was unveiled this week, giving audiences an early glimpse into a romantic drama that draws poetic parallels with classical Hindu mythology.

The film revolves around Paartha Saarathi, a young and driven startup founder grappling with heartbreak after the end of his first love. In search of emotional refuge, he travels to his sister's native town. There, fate leads him to a quaint old library, where he meets a woman whose quiet charm slowly alters the course of his life. What begins as a gentle friendship deepens into an intimate bond, culminating in a passionate night that mirrors the legendary pre-marital union of King Dushyant and Shakuntala from ancient lore. The narrative weaves memory, longing, and love, echoing timeless themes through a contemporary lens.

Nenapaadalu Shaakuntale is directed by Vinay Chandrahasa, who also shapes the film's nuanced emotional tone. The cinematography is handled by Vishal Kumar Gowda, whose visuals are expected to lend lyrical depth to the storytelling. Editing is by Madhu Thumbakere, while the music is composed by Prasanna Kumar M. S. The film's songs feature lyrics penned by noted writer Pramod Marvanthe.

The project is produced by Vismaya K, with Bhaskaran Muthuswamy serving as co-producer. Viraaj Kolatlu plays the male lead, Paartha Saarathi, while Kavya Bhagvanth stars as the female lead, bringing to life the character who becomes central to the film's emotional journey.

With its blend of modern romance and mythological resonance, Nenapaadalu Shaakuntale has already sparked curiosity. The release of the poster on Wednesday is expected to set the tone for what promises to be a reflective and emotionally rich cinematic experience.

Sukhibhavaa Teaser, Songs Release

The teaser and song release program of the new film 'Sukhibhavaa' was held in a grand manner at Sri Renukamba Studio. The couple, Santosh Kumar-Bhargavi Santosh, have invested under the banner of their son name, Ved Aryan Films.

Mysore-based N.K. Rajesh Naidu, who was known as an assistant to many including Yogaraj Bhat, wrote the story, screenplay, dialogues and Direction.

As the name Sukhibhavaa suggests, all the work has been completed smoothly from the beginning without any hitches. Santosh Kumar says that he produced it with the inspiration of his friend and well-wisher 'Robert' producer Umapati Srinivasa Gowda.

Speaking later, the Director said that the film is full of love, emotions, humour and entertainment. Initially, a different title was given. By the time the story was written, it became 'Sukhibhavaa'. They say that the first love in life is the best love. At some point, when you understand it and go in search of it, will you find it? Or not? An attempt has been made to show what all this has to be said in a positive way. N.K. Rajesh Naidu revealed a little information that this is a journey of life.

Mahendra from Bangalore is the hero. Sushmita Nayak and Vihanshi Hegde are the heroines. The rest are played by Gaurav Shetty, Shobharaj, Ravi Shankar Gowda, Sunil Puranik, Tukalisanthu, Maithri Jaggi and others. Pramod Maravanthe has provided lyrics for three songs, and Santosh Kumar and N.K. Rajesh Naidu for the last song. B.J. Bharath-Shubham-Vian. SA has composed the music. Among these, actor Sharan is the voice for the song 'Beda Maccha Beda'.

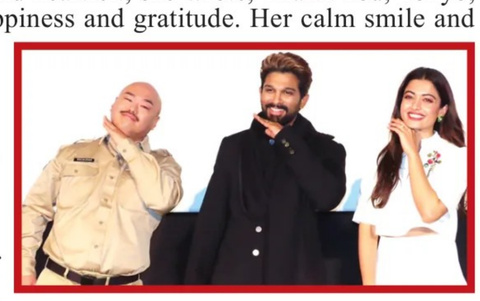
Cinematography is by S.B. Manjunath Nayak, executive producer is Vinay.N, editing is by Madhuthumbukere, Sahasra Narasimha. The film has been shot in beautiful locations like Bangalore, Udupi, Sakleshpur, Kalasa.

Pradeep Ranganathan Plans Sci Fi Film With Two Heroines

Actor and filmmaker Pradeep Ranganathan is reportedly preparing for a new science fiction film, marking a fresh phase in his fast-growing career. According to reports, the film may feature Sreeleela and Meenakshi Chaudhary as the female leads. The project is expected to be produced by the same studio that backed his blockbuster film Love Today. Pradeep has steadily risen as a popular youth icon in Tamil cinema. He first made a strong impression as a director with Comali. Later, his acting debut as a hero in Love Today won him massive appreciation for his natural expressions and relatable performance.

Rashmika Mandanna Shares Joyful Moments From Pushpa Two Japan

Actors Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna received a grand welcome in Japan during the promotions of their blockbuster film Pushpa 2: The Rule. The film, which was a major success in India, is now set for a Japanese theatrical release on January 16. The stars travelled to Tokyo as part of the promotional tour and were greeted with loud cheers and excitement from fans. Rashmika Mandanna shared several moments from the Tokyo premiere on her social media. In the pictures, she was seen posing with Allu Arjun in the iconic Pushpa style. Keeping her caption short and heartfelt, she wrote, Thank You, Tokyo, expressing her happiness and gratitude. Her calm smile and simple presence won hearts online.



A major highlight of the event was Allu Arjun's surprise for Japanese fans. During the premiere, he delivered one of his famous Pushpa dialogues in Japanese. The unexpected moment left the audience thrilled and earned him thunderous applause. The hall echoed with cheers as the actor smiled and thanked the crowd. Rashmika stood beside him, and both actors bowed to the audience as a mark of respect. After the screening, Allu Arjun met fans, signed autographs, and took photographs. The film's team later shared a video from the event, highlighting the massive response and confirming the Japan release date. On the work front, Rashmika Mandanna was last seen in the romantic drama The Girlfriend, which focused on emotional struggles and toxic relationships.

RJ Balaji Confirms Karuppu Release Update With Second Song

Director RJ Balaji has clarified that actor Suriya's upcoming film Karuppu will not be released during the Pongal festival. Addressing growing speculation and fan excitement, the director confirmed that the next official update, including the film's release date, will be announced only along with the release of the second single from the movie. With several films announcing festive releases during Diwali, New Year and Pongal, fans were expecting a similar update for Karuppu. However, the makers remained silent, leading to confusion. To clear the air, RJ Balaji released a video message explaining the delay and sharing clarity about the film's progress.

Ram Charan Calls RRR Co Star Jr NTR Mad Driver

Actor Ram Charan recently shared a fun and honest moment about his RRR co-star Jr NTR, calling him a mad driver but also one of the safest people behind the wheel. The actor made these comments while appearing as a guest on the Season 2 finale of the popular automobile talk show Cars With Stars.

During the show, Ram Charan spoke about his love for cars and driving. When asked a bold question about which co-actor he would trust to drive at a speed of 250 kmph while he sat in the passenger seat, Charan answered without hesitation. He named his close friend and RRR co-star Jr NTR, praising his confidence on the road.

Ram Charan said that very few actors truly enjoy driving and added that Jr NTR is one of them. He described him as a crazy and mad driver, but quickly clarified that he still considers him reliable. The actor also shared that many friends had spoken about strange and intense experiences while sitting in Jr NTR's car. He admitted that even he had one such experience but chose not to share details.

Ending the topic on a positive note, Ram Charan said he still believes Jr NTR is the safest among all his co-actors when it comes to driving. His comments reflected the strong bond and trust between the two stars. When asked if there was anyone he would never sit with in a car, Charan smiled and avoided naming anyone.

Kangana Ranaut Recalls Painful 2016 Amid Hrithik Roshan Dispute

Actor Kangana Ranaut has looked back at 2016, calling it one of the most painful years of her life due to a major legal dispute with actor Hrithik Roshan. In a recent Instagram post, Kangana questioned why events from that year are again trending on social media, saying the memories still carry emotional weight.

Kangana said 2016 began on a high note for her career. After delivering back-to-back hits like Queen and Tanu Weds Manu Returns, she had reached the peak of success and became one of the highest-paid actresses in Bollywood. She shared old photographs from that period and described it as a time when her career was rapidly rising. However, the professional success soon turned bitter. Kangana said she received a controversial legal notice from a colleague in January 2016, which changed everything. According to her, the issue deeply affected her personal and work life and divided the film industry into insiders and outsiders. She added that success began to feel dangerous, and her life turned stressful, with several legal battles following one after another. The controversy grew after Kangana referred to Hrithik Roshan as a silly ex during an interview. This led to the exchange of legal notices, leaked emails and serious allegations from both sides, keeping the matter in the public eye for years. Reflecting on the present, Kangana said she now realises how temporary those troubles were. She shared that if she had known in 2016 that by 2026 the controversy would no longer matter, she would not have suffered so deeply.

Sai Pallavi Debuts Bollywood With Ek Din Film Romance

Sai Pallavi has officially entered Bollywood, marking a new phase in her acting journey. The South Indian star is widely known for strong performances, graceful dance, and a natural screen presence. She has built a loyal fan base by choosing roles that value content over glamour. Her characters often carry emotional depth and social meaning, making her one of the most respected actresses in Indian cinema today.

Many believed her Bollywood debut would be the upcoming Ramayan, where she plays Sita. However, her first Hindi film is Ek Din, a romantic drama starring Zunaid Khan, son of actor Aamir Khan. The film went on floors in early 2024, but its release was delayed. Recently, the makers released the teaser, which has already created strong interest among viewers.

Ek Din is directed by Sunil Pandey and tells a gentle love story set in Japan. The film follows two Indians whose lives connect during a single day in a foreign land. Large portions were shot across Japan, and the teaser highlights the country's streets and beauty. Sai Pallavi impresses with subtle expressions, while Zunaid Khan shows promise in a quiet, mature role.

Music for the film is composed by Ram Sampath, adding weight to the narrative. Interestingly, Ek Din is a remake of a 2016 Thai film. Sai Pallavi had earlier avoided remakes, even turning down big offers. By choosing this project, she breaks her own rule. Ek Din is set to release on May 1, 2026, making her Bollywood arrival official.

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